1-1-1994

Teacher evaluation : an in-depth interview study of teachers and principals.

James J. Cokkinias
University of Massachusetts Amherst

TEACHER EVALUATION: AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW STUDY OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

A Dissertation Presented

by

JAMES J. COKKINIAS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1994

School of Education

TEACHER EVALUATION: AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW STUDY OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

A Dissertation Presented

by

JAMES J. COKKINIAS

Approved as to style and content by:

Irving Seidman

Irving Seidman, Chair

Patt Dodds

Patt Dodds, Member

Helen Schneider

Helen Schneider, Member

John C Lavey

Bailey W. Jackson, Dean
School of Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their assistance in completing this dissertation: the many teachers and principals who found time from their busy schedules to talk with me about their experiences as educators; the members of my dissertation committee, Irv Seidman, my chairman, for teaching me how to look more closely at my environment, Patt Dodds, for teaching me to become a more critical consumer of research, and Helen Schneider for helping me smooth some of my rough edges; Ellen LaFleche and Sheryl Jablonski for their technical expertise; and my wife Emily, who paid such a great price for putting up with me during these past several years.

ABSTRACT

TEACHER EVALUATION: AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW STUDY

OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

MAY 1994

JAMES J. COKKINIAS, B.A. AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

M.S.T. AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

C.A.G.S. AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

ED.D. UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Irving Seidman

This study looked at what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process. These teachers and principals, in four different school systems in Massachusetts and Connecticut, shared their perspectives through a series of in-depth interviews.

Teachers believed that evaluations should provide feedback, offer positive reinforcement, and foster pedagogical growth. Teachers also expressed more confidence in the evaluation process when evaluated by principals they respect and by a process that is credible. Although the teachers generally felt positive about the teacher evaluation process, all experienced some negative situations that were the result of careless, weak, perfunctory, and manipulative evaluations.

Principals expressed that the lack of time and adequate training hindered their ability to properly perform evaluations along with all the other required tasks. They

also indicated they experienced a trend of evaluations evolving from checklists into other formats, and they voiced preferences for ideal evaluation formats which they would like to use.

As a result, this study recommends at the district level that superintendents and school boards need to: (1) determine the level of priority of teacher evaluations, (2) provide the necessary time and training to accomplish evaluation tasks, (3) facilitate the evaluation evolution rather than impede its progress. At the building level, the study recommends that principals: (1) clearly communicate organizational details and contractual obligations associated with the teacher evaluation format, (2) offer additional services for upcoming observations or evaluations, (3) provide both compliments on good teaching and suggestions for improvement, (4) avoid manipulative situations in the teacher evaluation process.

The study also suggests that future research explore the perspectives of both school boards and superintendents on the issues surrounding the teacher evaluation process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

C H A P T E R I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This dissertation looked at what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process. This study detailed their experiences in the process through the stories gathered from in-depth interviews. It provided an opportunity for those individuals to talk about their experiences in their own words, and thus, provided the perspectives of teachers and principals.

The evaluation of teachers is a process that has taken place since the teacher and student relationship has existed. During ancient times, a person's ability to earn a living as a teacher was based upon his/her employer's (supervisor's) notion of what constituted successful teaching (Miller, 1987). Customer satisfaction usually translated into continued employment. Even though teacher evaluations have evolved from these ancient and economically motivated formats to contemporary styles that purport to examine teaching skills, the control of this process remains with the employer.

The literature indicates that school systems evaluate their teachers for two major reasons, formative and summative. The formative purpose of evaluation is improvement of instructional quality (Gage, 1959; Miller, 1987). Dressel (1978) indicated that evaluation should be

designed to "improve the quality of learning and increase the percentage of students who attain the important and agreed-upon goals of learning" (p. 338). Although worded differently by educators, this notion of improving some aspect of teaching or learning by helping teachers is an important purpose of the evaluation process. The summative purpose of teacher evaluation is its use for making administrative decisions on promotions, salaries, or tenure (Gage, 1959; Harris, 1986; Miller, 1987).

Ideally, a principal's efforts to improve teachers' classroom performance should be linked to administrative decisions on promotions and tenure. The teacher evaluation process should recognize and reward those educators whose teaching facilitates students' learning. This process should also reveal those teachers whose pedagogical skills are deficient and who require remediation of teaching strategies. The research, however, indicates that several obstacles prevent the formative (helping) and summative (supervisory) components from working compatibly.

In most schools, the principal is the only person responsible for evaluating teachers, yet as Dressel (1978) indicated, it is very difficult for one individual to successfully accomplish both formative and summative goals. Teachers are more likely to welcome an evaluative process if its major focus is to help rather than to find fault (Bolton, 1973). It is unrealistic, however, to assume that

all teachers have exemplary teaching skills and will never need remediation. Because principals must have alternatives to deal with teachers who cannot or will not improve, there must be a summative component of the teacher evaluation process.

The adverse effects of being the only evaluator in a school become obvious when a principal attempts to use both summative and formative strategies. The notion that teachers respond more favorably to a positive approach was reinforced by McGregor (1960) when he indicated that "judgments which are positive can perhaps be communicated effectively, but it is rather difficult to communicate critical judgments without generating defensiveness" (p. 84). This view was supported by Lewis (1973) when he stated that telling teachers they are doing a poor job will not provide the necessary motivation to get them to improve their performance.

Personal experience as a principal suggests another obstacle which prevents the formative and summative perspectives from working in concert: the potential for litigation surrounding summative decisions. An accumulation of at least two years' worth of evidence of poor teaching for teachers is legally necessary in Massachusetts before attempting to terminate a teacher's employment (personal communication with lawyer James Connors, March, 1992). The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, which changed

the termination language for teachers from good cause to the higher standard of just cause, reinforces the need to collect this evidence. During this time span, a principal is forced by the direction of court decisions to assume a summative position in evaluating a teacher whose performance is in question.

The more publicized aspect of this dilemma focuses on the potential conflicts between the notion of instructional improvement and the need to make administrative decisions. Trying to resolve these conflicts has not necessarily improved teaching. The process of evaluating teachers could be improved if we had more knowledge about how teachers and principals are affected by evaluation. It is within the boundaries of the struggle between the requirements of the organization and the needs of the individual that I studied what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process.

This study probed the perspectives of these two groups of educators because they are most affected by the evaluation process. The information that I collected by in-depth interviewing, provided a deeper understanding of how teacher evaluations influence teachers and principals. This increased awareness also may help to improve the quality of the evaluation process for teachers and principals.

Historical Perspectives on Teacher Evaluation

Historically, the requirements of the school systems have served as the framework for constructing teacher evaluation formats. Ancient Greek and Roman parents paid for their children's education and evaluated their children's teachers by using continued employment as the reward for good teaching (Miller, 1987). After hundreds of years, the power to dominate the evaluation process still remains with the people holding the purse strings. The intensity of this skewed influence on teacher evaluation can be illustrated by examining the most commonly used evaluation format, the "common" law model.

This mode of evaluation has been around for so long that no one remembers how or why it was put into practice; thus its name. This model, which is found in nearly sixty-five percent of this country's school systems, is characterized by lists of standardized criteria that were formulated from a supervisory perspective (McGreal, 1983). The literature suggests that a large portion of our teachers are evaluated using formats in which they have had no input.

Can a process which is so thoroughly dominated by the school system's perspectives meet the individual needs of teachers and principals? This question is difficult to address because teacher evaluations have been performed over the years without really understanding how educators react to this process, without knowing how they are affected over

the long term, and without knowing what these individuals need from the evaluation process. The author took this viewpoint based on information gained from two pilot projects (Cokkinias, 1990).

Both small studies involved surveying and interviewing several secondary teachers on how they perceived their jobs and how evaluation influenced their professional lives. Some of the data raised issues related to the effectiveness of present day evaluation procedures for the individuals who were interviewed. While all participants believed that some form of evaluation should occur, they could not agree on how this evaluation process should take place. All of the teachers, however, did agree that their present system of evaluation was neither providing all the help they needed nor the satisfaction they wanted.

Sometimes their ambivalent feelings about their evaluations prompted teachers to augment their school's formal evaluation process with their own informal strategies. Several teachers used information gathered from questionnaires completed by their students at varying points during the school year. Another method that was used to provide feedback was peer observation, in which a neighboring teacher "dropped in" to observe a lesson. A third strategy involved discussing school related issues with their own children to obtain feedback that could assist them in their classrooms. While there were differences in

the data gathering methodologies, all teachers studied made varying efforts to address their own needs for information about their teaching performance.

While teachers' perspectives are important to the success of teacher evaluations, the viewpoints of the administrators who are obligated to perform teacher evaluations are also vital. These individuals, who are mostly principals, have to perform evaluations using a format and a process most often not of their choosing. These administrators also must balance the time required to evaluate teachers with the time needed to perform a wide variety of other tasks. As with the teachers they are evaluating, the perspectives of principals are critical to the success of teacher evaluations; consequently, the important issues surrounding their concerns also need to be considered.

Striefer (1987) indicated that principals feel frustrated with present evaluation formats because of time constraints. As a principal who has spent sixteen years evaluating teachers, this researcher agrees with Striefer's assessment. Principals must devote time to other equally important issues such as school violence, health concerns, the decrease in test scores, and decreases in school funding. The increased responsibilities charged to building principals have placed serious strains on their time.

If we are not addressing the needs or wants of employees, then our ability to attain the potential benefits from quality teacher evaluations is limited at this time. Some of these limitations may be the result of using evaluation formats and processes that do not recognize the concerns of the individuals participating. Thus, uncovering teachers' and principals' experiences with the evaluation process and incorporating those findings into future evaluation procedures may improve the quality of teacher evaluations.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Current Evaluation Systems for Teachers and Principals

A situation in which the rules of the game are dominated by one player can create a disadvantage for the others. While not disputing an employer's right to evaluate his/her employees, this researcher argues that an evaluation system that fails to recognize the needs of the personnel it is designed to help will not be as effective as one that does. If teacher evaluations were constructed to include the perspectives of both teachers and principals, the process would be more meaningful for those individuals, and thus, more effective. Presently, this does not usually occur, and as a result, there are several problems that negatively influence the teacher evaluation process: the existence of many evaluation models, the lack of recognition

of individual needs, and the potential for retarding professional development by ignoring individual needs.

There does not seem to be one "right way" to evaluate teachers in American public schools. While there are four major evaluation formats in general use ("common law", product-based, goal-based and clinical supervision), evaluations in individual school systems are usually a unique blend of any parts of those four models. Educational experts have not settled on one evaluation format that is comfortable and suitable for all teachers and administrators. The following section will present a brief summary of those four models to illustrate the complexity of this issue.

As stated earlier, the "common law" model is the most frequently used system of teacher evaluation in American public schools (McGreal, 1983). Although this model is characterized by a summative (administrative decisions) nature, some "common law" models use formative (instructional improvement) language. This model is also characterized by lists of standardized criteria that apply to all personnel who are evaluated (McGreal, 1983).

A problem with this model is the assumption that all teachers, regardless of their experience, can be evaluated by the same criteria. Berliner (1988) reported that teachers at a novice level of development (usually one to five years experience) are more effectively evaluated

utilizing strategies that compensate for the conceptual deficiencies found in beginning teachers, and recommended that these novices receive training in recording and analyzing their teaching behaviors. Berliner further stated that "what they probably need least is input from overzealous curriculum reformers and brilliant analysts of teaching who may expect far too much from the beginning teacher" (p. 22).

Because there is little or no staff input in the "common law" model, teachers do not have invested ownership in the evaluation procedures, and thus, most staff pay little attention to the results (McGreal, 1983). Clearly, the "common law" format is dominated by the perspectives of the evaluators in which they assume that their objectives are matched with those of the teachers. This is an erroneous assumption which relegates teachers to a passive rather than an active role in the evaluation process (Lewis, 1973). Clearly, if teachers are more active participants in their evaluations, they will accept the results more seriously. This notion is supported by Ashbaugh and Kaster (1987) who argue that teachers possess a "zone of acceptance" which make them more favorably inclined to believe and act on the results of teacher evaluations, if they are involved in designing the evaluation instrument.

A second approach to staff evaluation tries to balance the ideas of the individual with the needs of the

organization, and is called the goal-focused model (Castetter, 1986). This form of teacher evaluation stresses the formation of a strong relationship between the evaluator and the teacher in which frequent collaborative meetings are necessary. Self-evaluations are used to set goals which are often written into contracts that are continually examined by the teacher and supervisor. Periodic meetings are held to discuss the attainment of the goals of that evaluation cycle and to form additional goals for the next cycle. In this model the teacher takes an active rather than a passive role and works as a partner with the evaluator to formulate a professional development plan. This active involvement by teachers creates ownership in the evaluation process which further reinforces the teachers' responsibility for their own professional improvement (Witherspoon, 1989).

A problem with the goal-focused model is that it is not realistic in terms of the time and inservice resources available in most school settings (Iwanicki, 1981). Numerous and time-consuming meetings are a critical component of this process. Most teachers, however, have schedules with very little free time. If teachers are relieved from their teaching responsibilities for those meetings, coverage for their classes, study halls, and other duties needs to be provided. That coverage requires additional funding, which is an underlying problem with this model. Money is a determining factor in providing the

inservice programs teachers need to accomplish the goals of their evaluation cycle. Since taxpayers in some communities have become increasingly critical about money budgeted for professional development (Brainard, 1989), this model is not a fiscally attractive option.

Another disadvantage of the goal-focused model is that it can place too much emphasis on the attainment of measurable objectives (Iwanicki, 1981). The teacher and the evaluator may concentrate their efforts solely on the goals outlined at the pre-evaluation conference. This intense focus on a limited number of teaching criteria (the goals) may result in the teacher and/or evaluator ignoring or missing some other teaching strengths or deficiencies. For example, allowing students sufficient wait time to answer questions is a suitable objective that a teacher can establish for his/her evaluation cycle, but not at the exclusion of other teaching skills. This disadvantage can be lessened if the teacher and evaluator maintain a broader perspective in the formation of the evaluation goals.

A third evaluation model uses the measurement of student performance as an indicator of teaching effectiveness and is called the product model (McGreal, 1983). Millman (1981) stated "that using student achievement as a measure of teacher competence rests on the assumption that an important function of teaching is to enhance student learning" (p.146). Supporters of the

product model state their preferences more strongly than Millman. These individuals indicate that other evaluation formats use subjective or inferential data (classroom observations) and they believe that the only objective way to evaluate an individual's teaching is to measure changes in how much students learn using a variety of testing instruments (McGreal, 1983).

There are two major categories of tests used to measure student growth: norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests. Standardized tests such as the SAT's or ACT's (College Board Achievement tests) are examples of norm-referenced tests. These tests ascertain an individual's performance in relationship to the performance of other individuals on the same measuring device (Popham, 1973). Criterion-referenced measures ascertain an individual's status with respect to a set performance standard (Popham, 1973). An example of a criterion-referenced test is the YMCA/YWCA life-saving test, in which all individuals must swim a certain distance to pass.

On the surface it seems logical that a teacher's evaluation should be based on measurable changes in students. The words of Reddin (1971), "If you cannot measure it, forget it, no one will know anyway" (p. 51) summarize the feelings of the product model proponents. In fact, this style of teacher evaluation resembles the

evaluation formats found in the business community where a premium is placed on using measurable characteristics. Peter Drucker (1954), a pioneer in the field of management practices, reinforces the notion that an appraisal must have clear, sharp standards that focus on provable performance in order for the evaluation process to be successful. This underscores the major selling point of the product model, its focus on measurable objectives.

A concern about using this model as the sole instrument in the teacher evaluation process is the lack of adequate reference points on which to measure student growth. Because norm-referenced tests do not give a clear picture of the skills to be tested, they are unfair to use in teacher evaluations (Popham, 1981). Criterion-referenced tests are so explicit in their presentation of criteria that teaching to the test may force teachers to exclude valuable material. The inadequacy of the tests is not the only concern with the product model. Factors external to the teacher's control, such as student I.Q., and the socio-economic status of students, can affect the rate of learning (McGreal, 1983).

A fourth method of teacher evaluation involves the use of clinical supervision techniques in which there is an emphasis on motivation and improvement, rather than on supervision alone (Cogan, 1973, Goldhammer, 1969). The term "clinical" refers to a recurring cycle of diagnosing teaching problems and treating those teaching concerns. The

teacher and the supervisor (principal, department head, or supervisory team) work very closely during the supervision cycle. In fact, the closeness between the two parties should create mutual trust and openness, thus allowing the rest of the process to flow smoothly (Goldhammer, 1969). The close trusting relationship that is part of the clinical supervision process can involve two people, or as Cogan (1973) described, an entire team. The supervisory team (usually an administrator, a teacher, and a counselor) has a leader who is responsible for communicating with the teacher directly, but all members of the supervisory team are responsible for gathering data.

The close, helping relationship between the teacher and the supervisor is instrumental in the success of this process. The teacher plays a major role in the design and implementation of this model, which assumes that the teacher desires professional growth (Miller & Miller, 1987). This points to a major disadvantage in using clinical supervision as a teacher evaluation model. It would be nice to think that all educators want to grow professionally, but that is not a realistic assessment of all teachers. While most teachers might welcome opportunities to participate in a formative evaluation in collaboration with a supervisor, this researcher has encountered teachers during his sixteen years as an administrator who were not enthusiastic about

cultivating that collegial relationship and who were not motivated to improve their teaching skills.

This summary of the four most commonly used models of teacher evaluations illustrates how complex the evaluation process can be. The presence of so many formats and the lack of agreement as to what actually constitutes proper evaluation methodology contribute to the notion that there is no "right way" to evaluate teachers. Some teachers and principals may be appropriately served with their teacher evaluation system, while others may experience frustration and disappointment with their involvement in the teacher evaluation process.

Potential Effects on Teachers

The ramifications of an evaluation system that doesn't recognize the needs of the individuals it is supposed to serve are that not all teachers can or will find alternatives to the formal evaluation process. In my pilot studies, I interviewed teachers who had found ways to supplement the system's format with their own strategies. I don't believe, however, that my sample was large enough to conclude that all teachers are finding ways to meet their pedagogical needs. What happens to those teachers who cannot or will not find informal avenues to assess the quality of their teaching is a crucial issue in education.

Another factor for teachers is the heightened anxiety that frequently results from being subjected to an

evaluation process that ignores their views. As stated earlier, most teacher evaluation formats used in the United States are dominated by the school system's perspective. The issue, as Miller indicated, (1972) is that almost any form of evaluation is intimidating. This condition exists because the employer holds power over the employee. The use of traditional evaluation formats can only heighten anxious feelings. In spite of the various images teachers project on the job, teaching is still a mode of economic survival, and any actions that potentially threaten that status will raise the individual's anxiety. This is consistent with motivation theory as described by Sergiovanni and Starrat (1979). They stated that management tasks (such as evaluation of personnel) can arouse uncertainty about employment, and thus, can be threatening.

Another problem with teacher evaluation formats is that they can retard professional development. Not all teachers arrive on the job at the same stage of teaching expertise. As suggested by Berliner (1988), the novice teacher possesses different pedagogical needs from teachers who are in the competent or expert stages of development. New teachers are more prone to making mistakes and do not possess the vast repertoire of more experienced teachers. These novice educators should be evaluated differently than experienced teachers. Most school systems, however, use the same evaluation format with all teachers, regardless of

their needs. Since much of a teacher's growth in skill levels occurs while on the job, and since the responsibility for professional growth usually rests on the teacher's initiatives, the recognition of individual needs is important.

Potential Effects on Principals

Issues in teacher evaluations also affect principals. Present evaluation formats almost certainly deal as inappropriately with the skill levels of principals as with the needs of teachers. Many evaluation formats assume that principals have observation, recording and interpretation skills. This may or may not be an accurate assumption. These same formats also may ignore evaluation skills that some principals do possess. This situation usually results in a reduction in the quality and effectiveness of teacher evaluations.

Another problem for principals is time. Today's secondary principal is required to perform a growing number of tasks. Many of these tasks must be accomplished during the school day, the length of which has not increased in proportion to the additional work. Principals, however, can save time by using a checklist style of evaluating teachers. These kinds of evaluations are usually ineffective in helping teachers improve their skills. Evaluation formats that help teachers improve their skills usually require a lot more time to administer. As a principal, this

researcher is caught between wanting to perform quality teacher evaluations and needing to complete other tasks. This dilemma sometimes forces me to prioritize tasks, which sometimes results in non-completion of teacher evaluations.

Significance of the Study

The researcher interviewed twenty secondary teachers and principals about their participation in the evaluation process. The research attempted to provide information about how teachers and principals are influenced by the teacher evaluation process. The methodology of gathering data directly from teachers and principals through a series of in-depth interviews differed from traditional efforts, and provided new perspectives on this old issue.

The ability to gather information that will provide new insights into the evaluation process will depend upon the methodology used to garner such data. Traditional questionnaires and structured interviews probably will not yield new data on the issue of teacher evaluations. Since these methods usually are dominated by the researcher's perspectives, they may not uncover an individual's true feelings about the topic. A methodology that permits the participants' perspectives to dominate the data hopefully will generate new information about how teachers and principals feel about the evaluation process. In order to maximize the participants' freedom to express their feelings in their own words, the researcher employed phenomenological

interviewing techniques. These in-depth interviewing strategies allowed participants to tell their stories within the context of their lives.

The next section will present a review of the literature on those aspects of teacher evaluation that pertain to the research question: What is it like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process? The literature review demonstrates that current studies and methodologies are leaving a void that this dissertation attempted to fill.

C H A P T E R II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Perspective

The following summary of the evolution of teacher evaluations will frame the issue of power and its relation to current evaluation practices. As stated earlier, the real power in a school district lies with those individuals who control the money. School boards and superintendents not only control the finances, but historically they have also dominated the evaluation practices of the employees.

Linking past practices to present teacher evaluation conditions will underscore the issue of power and the resulting lack of awareness of teachers' and principals' perspectives surrounding teacher evaluations. An understanding of the past may also clarify why teacher evaluation formats have been designed and orchestrated from the employer's perspective with little or no recognition of the various needs of the teachers and principals who participate in the process.

In the teaching profession, the first attempts at evaluation linked performance to economic survival. If you lost enough students, whether justified or not, you were forced to seek another method of earning a living. The practice of paying fees directly to teachers continued through the tenth century at the University of Paris, where fees were tied directly to the instructor's ability to

attract students (Travers, 1981). The practice of compensating instructors directly for their services persists even today in certain areas (Miller, 1987). Music and dance instruction are examples in which parents pay for private instruction for their children.

This practice of compensating instructors persisted in Europe for centuries. In the United States, however, people such as Horace Mann began in the early 1800's to cultivate popular support for tax-based public education (Alexander & Alexander, 1980). During the mid 1800s, two specific events forced a dramatic change in the way the financing of education was to take place. In 1851 the United States Supreme Court supported the Pennsylvania Legislature's efforts to create a system of common schools, and in 1852, Massachusetts enacted the first compulsory school attendance law (Alexander and Alexander, 1980). These changes foreshadowed the famous Kalamazoo case of 1872 in which the Supreme Court said that taxes could be levied on the public to expand the common school (elementary school) through high school. Also during this time the government established a general property tax, which served as the primary source of revenue for the state-established mandates of public education (Alexander & Alexander, 1980).

This shift in the way education as an enterprise was financially supported also altered the way in which teachers were compensated. Teachers no longer collected fees

directly from students, but were paid from the public funds in the communities in which they worked. This move created an economic equity for teachers that previously did not exist, but it also produced a temporary vacuum in the manner in which teachers were appraised.

The methods and techniques that were first employed to fill this void in the evaluation process were based on the individual preferences of the local superintendents (Peterson, 1982). These individuals were initially responsible for teacher evaluations. In the late 1800s, as schools grew in size and number, the superintendents transferred this responsibility to the principals (Peterson, 1982). Currently, most teacher evaluations are performed by principals, using formats constructed by themselves, other administrators, or school boards (McGreal, 1983).

As American public education evolved in the twentieth century, teacher evaluations were generally unsystematic, highly personalized, and haphazard. Weber (1987) indicated that the method of evaluation practiced during this time was teacher "inspection". Untrained administrators observed teachers to check for conformity to district standards. Evaluations sometimes focused on critiques of student behavior, teacher personality, or out-of-school activities (Knezevick, 1984). Teachers today are still being inspected for conformity to school board standards in those districts

that use a "common law" checklist style of teacher evaluation.

The history of teacher evaluation indicates the dominance of the employer's perspective. Since school boards and superintendents have retained control of the operation of school districts, this tradition continues. Perhaps this emphasis on the employer's wants or needs is the result of hundreds of years of history. The next section will present current research on teacher evaluation, including studies of various teacher evaluation systems and research on teacher attitudes about teacher evaluations.

Current Research

Most research has focused on examining existing systems of teacher evaluations using quantitative methodologies such as surveys or questionnaires. From these studies, researchers gained some information about the nature and effectiveness of evaluation formats. Another research branch has focused on teacher attitudes toward various components of teacher evaluation systems. Using questionnaires and structured interviews, researchers discovered some of the things teachers and principals like and dislike about the teacher evaluation process. But no one has talked in depth to teachers and principals about what it is like to participate in the teacher evaluation process. This is the void this research hopes to fill.

The following studies not only demonstrate the ability of quantitative methodologies to extract information about existing evaluation practices, but in my view, also illustrate a weakness with quantitative strategies. As he reviewed the research, the researcher confronted a large body of factual knowledge about teacher evaluations, but did not discover the meaning of that information within the context of a teacher's or principal's professional life. The research suffers from a glaring deficiency in the experiential information about the teacher evaluation process. The importance of the research question (Within the context of their work experiences, what is it like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process?) is illuminated by what does not exist in the literature.

One set of studies examined various facets associated with the teacher evaluation process in a particular school district. These investigations, which used questionnaires and structured interviews to gather data, usually involved researchers visiting one or more schools to ask questions of teachers, principals, and superintendents. Even though educators were questioned or interviewed, these studies focused on various aspects of the evaluation formats, not on the teachers or principals who used them.

In a study that examined the observation practices of the district's teacher evaluation system, Bird and Little

(1985) visited eight Colorado high schools. Using questionnaires, they analyzed the observation practices in nine areas; frequency, duration, preparation, type of data taken, mutual respect of teacher and observer, follow-up to the evaluation, the role of evaluation in the observation process, reinforcement, and initiatives regarding changing teacher practices. Their most notable findings indicated that administrative observations were supported by teachers when the evaluation format was supported by the teachers (Bird & Little, 1985). This finding supports the practice in Massachusetts in which teacher evaluation formats are negotiated into teacher contracts as a result of Chapter 188 (School Improvement Act).

Another interesting finding of the Bird and Little (1985) study was that peer observations lacked support by the teachers in the larger city high schools, but were supported by teachers in the smaller high schools. The principals of the smaller schools had established a supportive atmosphere which facilitated the successful use of peer observations as an observation tool, something their larger school counterparts were unable to accomplish. Perhaps the characteristics of a smaller school, such as class size, teacher and student comfort level, and student demographics, foster a more nurturing environment.

In a study designed to discover the emphasis of their evaluation formats, Peterson (1985) examined the teacher

evaluation instruments of sixteen school districts. The questionnaire-driven results showed that in most school districts the systems of teacher evaluation depend on criteria that focus on non-instructional activities, such as cooperation with peers and administrators, and attendance. Although Peterson acknowledged that non-instructional issues should be part of the total evaluation process, he concluded that these items should be evaluated separately from classroom performance and their importance should be secondary to classroom performance criteria.

Peterson's study illustrated a problem common to many school districts: the focus of evaluation is first to satisfy the needs of the employer. Employee accountability and program justification to the public are two of those employer needs. The suggestion that school boards intentionally ignore initiatives to improve teachers' instructional capabilities might be unfair. Nonetheless, their continued reluctance to share their power in the teacher evaluation process may retard teacher development. If school boards and superintendents were more aware of how teachers and principals react to the process of teacher evaluation, they might be willing to restructure traditional evaluation formats.

One of the most comprehensive and frequently cited studies that examined teacher evaluation formats was performed by Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, and Berstein

(1984) for the National Institute of Education. This study was designed to uncover effective components of successful teacher evaluation systems. The researchers surveyed thirty-two school districts nationwide to find districts that had departed from traditional practices and sought more highly developed teacher evaluation practices. They were looking for school systems in which teacher evaluation was a district priority and those which used evaluation formats that deviated from traditional checklist styles. They conducted exploratory interviews at the 32 sites and collected data that included district evaluation goal statements, evaluation instruments, and collective bargaining agreements. They "finally selected four school districts representing diverse teacher evaluation processes and organizational environments: Salt Lake City, Utah; Lake Washington, Washington; Greenwich, Connecticut; and Toledo, Ohio (p. 4)."

Using what these researchers (Wise et al., 1984) considered a "case-study approach", they spent a week in each district interviewing central office personnel, building-level administrators, officers of the local teachers' associations, school board members, parent and community representatives, and local reporters. In each district they visited six schools of varying size and levels and interviewed at least six teachers. All interviews were structured for comparative purposes.

The authors summarized their findings into five areas which reflected similar evaluation criteria for positive evaluations in all four districts. First, teacher evaluation systems must suit the educational goals, management styles, teaching concepts, and community values of the school district (p. 66). Second, a top-level commitment to and resources for evaluation must outweigh the convenience of checklists and procedures. This includes providing evaluators with sufficient time, periodically assessing the quality of evaluations, and training evaluators (p. 67). Third, the school district must decide the main purpose of its teacher evaluation system and then match the process to the purpose (p. 70). Fourth, to sustain financial support, the teacher evaluation process must be seen as valid, reliable, and effective by the community (p. 73). Fifth, teachers must be involved in and be responsible for the quality of teacher evaluations (p. 76).

This study identified common strengths of the evaluation formats of four school systems which placed a priority on quality teacher evaluations. The findings underscore the importance of integrating the viewpoints of all the players in the teacher evaluation process; the community, the school board, the superintendent, and the principals and teachers. This study indicated that the two groups traditionally omitted from making valuable input in

the construction of teacher evaluation formats, teachers and principals, need to be part of that process.

Teachers' views on teaching and learning components used for teacher certification were examined in one of the few reports that focused on teachers' perspectives (Logan et al., 1990). The state of Louisiana uses an assessment system that trains principals, master teachers, supervisors, and other educators to assess teachers' classroom performances for certification renewal. Teachers are evaluated in four areas: (1) preparation, planning and evaluation; (2) classroom behavior management; (3) learning environment; and (4) enhancement of learning. In this state-wide study, 2300 public school teachers responded to a mailed survey. The survey asked teachers for demographic data and for yes or no responses to questions related to the enhancement of learning (such as whether or not items were clearly stated, applicable to subject areas taught, free of bias, representative of reasonable expectations of performance, and essential to the enhancement of learning). Logan reported that the "yes" responses ranged from 66 percent to 99 percent in those five areas as they pertained to the enhancement of learning. She also summarized that the overwhelming majority of teachers endorsed the assessment format as applicable to their setting.

Logan's study is included in this review (Logan et al., 1990) for two reasons. First, it shows that training in

observation strategies is important in the successful execution of this type of assessment system. Secondly, it examined teachers' views on an issue (evaluation) that traditionally excludes their participation.

A study that focused on ways to assess novice teachers was performed by John Poggio et al. (1989). Over 1200 experienced teachers from 32 different certification fields, principals, and teacher educators were asked to rank a total of 112 behaviors judged by experts in the field to be important to the performance of beginning teachers. Although Poggio found consistency over the certification areas and professional groups, the choices of important behaviors were not consistent. Poggio et al. (1989) suggested that the assumption of a "single common core" of behaviors could seriously compromise a teacher evaluation system.

This study indicates that teaching is too complex to be evaluated by simplistic appraisal systems that ignore the wide variety of teaching characteristics important to novice teachers. The study by Poggio et al. (1989) is similar to a 1985 study that examined the views of teachers and principals on the issues surrounding teacher evaluation.

Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985) designed a study that examined the realities of formative evaluation. They surveyed seventeen administrators and thirty-six teachers on issues related to their current evaluation practices. Their

results can be summarized into three broad findings: (a) administrators are poorly trained in evaluation practices; (b) administrators are uncomfortable performing evaluations; (c) teachers are not involved in developing evaluation procedures. Stiggins and Bridgeford (1985) indicated that the failure of formative evaluations to improve instruction stems from a lack of understanding by principals and teachers about what formative evaluations can accomplish and how they should be conducted.

Although different in their depth and level of sophistication, these studies sought to examine various facets of existing evaluation formats. The researchers obtained data from questionnaires, surveys, and structured interviews and used the information to form comparisons or draw conclusions. The primary methodologies were quantitative and their purpose was to examine and compare existing practices.

Another category of studies examined teacher attitudes about evaluation practices. These studies, several of which combined interviewing strategies with quantitative methodologies, asked teachers and principals about their perceptions of issues in the evaluation arena.

Kiley (1988) conducted a study on teachers' and principals' views of teacher evaluation. She gave a questionnaire to 115 secondary teachers and 21 administrators from six different Maryland school districts.

The questionnaire was designed to assess the primary purposes of evaluation, the procedures used in the school systems, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the systems. Kiley's study reported on several familiar themes associated with the teacher evaluation issue. Teachers and administrators agreed that the primary goal of evaluation should be the improvement of the teacher's classroom performance. She also found considerable differences between teachers' and principals' views when the evaluations were used for contract renewal or termination.

This study included the views of both principals and teachers on the issue of teacher evaluation. The results were not startling. For example, Kiley (1988) reported that principals believed that they needed more time to accomplish evaluations. Her work, however, seemed more balanced than other studies on teacher evaluation because she included the views from the two major players in the teacher evaluation arena.

In a study designed to determine attitudes toward teacher evaluations in the Milwaukee public schools, Backus (1989) used teacher evaluation documents, teacher contracts, school board policies, superintendent interviews, and surveys of teachers and principals in the 21 urban and suburban Milwaukee school districts. Over half of the 10,000 teachers and three-fourths of the 442 principals responded to the surveys. Backus (1989) reported that seven

different evaluation methods were used in the Milwaukee school districts. She also reported that supervision is infrequent and is primarily performed by the principal. As with Kiley's (1988) study, the issue of time as it relates to the principal's responsibility of evaluating teachers was raised. Kiley and Backus did not probe deeply into the problem of utilizing the principal's time, as their research methodology did not include in-depth interviewing of principals.

In a study that examined the perceptions of teachers on administrative evaluation of instruction, more corroborating evidence emerged. As a result of structured interviews, Swender (1985) reported that teachers had varying views on administrative evaluation of instruction. As in Kiley's (1988) study, teachers believed that personal bias and the personality of the evaluator influenced the evaluation. Additionally, the results of the evaluations as they pertained to instructional improvement were perceived differently by the teachers. Some new information from Swender's (1985) dissertation indicated that the teachers expressed different opinions as to who (principal, supervisor, department head) was most qualified to evaluate.

Swender's (1985) work not only reinforces some of the existing research, it provides insight into teachers' perceptions of the principal's qualifications to perform evaluations. This research also used interviewing as its

primary methodology. While its structured format allowed Swender to uncover teachers' perceptions about principals' qualifications, this format did not allow her to uncover the reasons behind those perceptions. Using the methodology of in-depth phenomenological interviewing would have helped to make sense of those teachers' perceptions, and thus, make the data more valuable.

Turchetti (1989) studied the impact of teachers' perceptions of school principals' actions on the teachers' ability to perform their jobs. While a variety of principal behaviors were examined, some interesting information emerged in one of the sub-categories of job-related teacher evaluations, positive or negative incidents occurring during evaluations. Four or five teachers from six different secondary schools in New York state were asked to relate accounts of principals' actions that they perceived affected their job performance in a positive or negative way. Turchetti sorted these accounts or incidents into what he termed "satisfiers" and "dissatisfiers". In analyzing the data, Turchetti divided the principals' actions into job-related and non-job related categories.

A key piece of information derived from this study is that teachers can find positive results in the evaluation process. Turchetti reported that eighty percent of the incidents that were deemed satisfiers arose from principals' actions dealing with positive evaluations.

While this study illuminated the potential positive nature of teacher evaluations, it did not uncover the causal factors surrounding teachers' reasons for their position on teacher evaluations. As with Swender's (1985) study, in-depth interviewing might uncover how teachers form opinions about the evaluation process.

Teachers' perspectives on teacher evaluation were the subject of a comprehensive study performed by Peterson and Comeaux (1989) using a U.S. Department of Education grant. Their study examined the content and context of teacher evaluation from the perspectives of classroom teachers. They interviewed 24 high school English teachers in four urban high schools that used a particular system of evaluation. Two schools were located in Tampa and two in Miami. They also interviewed a similar number of teachers in two Wisconsin cities that used a different evaluation format. As in Florida, they studied four urban Wisconsin high schools, two in Green Bay and two in Madison. They also observed each teacher in the classroom, interviewed school personnel in charge of evaluation, and took field notes on the school context.

Peterson and Comeaux found that teachers' perceptions of evaluation systems are influenced by the content and context of the evaluation format. They also reported that teachers' beliefs about what constitutes good teaching influence their ratings of evaluation formats. Another

conclusion was that even ideal evaluation formats do not always work as intended. Their final conclusion was that teachers view professional development and reflective behaviors (rethinking goals and priorities) as the ideal purposes of teacher evaluation.

In discussing the implications of their study, Peterson and Comeaux (1989) observed that teacher evaluation systems must be viewed positively by the teachers. They also reported that the system's content and the context in which it will be used are important considerations of evaluation formats. Another implication of their work was that teacher evaluation systems should be tailored to serve differing needs.

This study touched upon some of the issues that arise when teachers are asked to describe what the evaluation process is like for them. The use of interviews coupled with the contextual information they gathered, enabled the researchers to conclude that evaluation systems should be tailored to serve differing needs. In examining two different evaluation systems (one that satisfied teachers' needs to be reflective about their teaching, which was highly rated by experienced teachers, and another that satisfied a teacher's need to acquire more content and contextual information, which was highly rated by inexperienced teachers), Peterson and Comeaux have begun to illuminate what it is like for teachers to be evaluated.

To uncover what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in the evaluation process, researchers need to ask the right questions in the proper context. The traditionally used methodologies, including structured interviews, probably will not uncover those occupational wants or needs. Using the format of phenomenological interviewing in this study helped to uncover the meaning that the teacher evaluation process holds for individual teachers and principals. The next section will explain how this methodology can provide access to information that quantitative and traditional qualitative strategies cannot.

C H A P T E R III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to describe what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in teacher evaluations. Does this process, which is traditionally dominated by the perspectives of school boards and superintendents, actually help principals improve instructional quality and provide teachers support and growth opportunities? To obtain the depth of information needed, a qualitative approach was employed to gather data from teachers and principals.

There are two major research paradigms used in the social sciences. One is quantitative research, which assumes that the nature of reality is constant and that we can observe, know, and measure everything in our world. The other is qualitative research, which assumes the existence of multiple realities that are highly subjective and in need of interpretation rather than measurement (Merriam, 1988). The researcher believes that these two paradigms exist because there is a need to look at our world from different vantage points, and thus he chose a research approach according to need, not according to research tradition.

Selection of the qualitative research paradigm was based on the requirements of the study, which is to

understand within the context of their lives what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process. While these educators shared some similar professional experiences within their respective groups, their stories also showed considerable differences. In order to capture their wide variety of experiences, the researcher needed the participants to tell their own stories unencumbered by the restrictions some research designs may present. A qualitative approach was best suited to accomplish this goal. Dabbs (1982) explained that "quality is the essential character or nature of something, quantity is the amount. Quality is the what; quantity is the how much. Qualitative refers to the meaning. . .while quantitative assumes the meaning and refers to the measure of it (p.32)."

Interviewing

In-depth interviewing was the qualitative method used to gather data. Although there are other qualitative strategies such as using observations or historical documents, interviewing principals and teachers enabled the researcher to understand in greater detail their perspectives on the issues surrounding teacher evaluations. Patton (1980) thoughtfully described this research method:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. . .We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an

> observer. We cannot observe how people organize the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world--we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (p.196).

There are varying interview styles based on the amount of structure used during the interview. On a continuum, highly structured, questionnaire-driven interviews are at one end with open-ended, conversational formats at the other (Merriam, 1988). The researcher used the conversational format of phenomenological interviewing to gather data.

This in-depth interviewing style is characterized by open-ended questions, which allow the participants to reconstruct significant events in their lives (Seidman, 1991). The framework of the interviewing process consisted of a series of three ninety-minute interviews (Seidman, Sullivan, & Schatzkamer, 1983). This format allowed the participants to build upon previously collected information as they told their own story in their own words. The purpose of the first interview is to "establish the context" (Seidman, p.11) of the participants' experience with the proposed topic. The second interview "reconstructs the details of their experience" (Seidman, p.11) within the previously established context from the first interview. The third interview is designed to allow the participants "to reflect on the meaning of their experiences" (Seidman, p. 12).

The interview structure consisted of three ninety-minute interviews spaced between three to seven days apart as detailed by Seidman (1991). The first interview asked the participant to explain how she became a teacher and what it is like to be a teacher. The second interview asked the participant to describe what it is like to participate in the teacher evaluation process. The third interview asked the participant to reflect on the meaning of the teacher evaluation process within the context constructed during the previous two interviews.

Participants

The two groups most influenced by the process of teacher evaluations are teachers and their primary evaluators, who are usually principals. Their perspectives on what this process means to them are an important part of this proposed study. The researcher interviewed teachers and principals from four different school systems in Connecticut and Massachusetts. (Preference for locally gathered data was based not only on time and money constraints. The researcher was very interested in having his teaching staff reap any potential benefits from his work. Teachers may find locally generated data more compelling, and thus may be more willing to consider any changes based upon research results.)

The four locations included schools in rural, urban and suburban areas. They also included two school systems that

purport to be on the cutting edge of evaluation methodology. One of those school systems, which is located in Massachusetts, uses the evaluation format derived from John Saphier and Robert Gower's work, The Skillful Teacher. The other progressive school system is located in a Connecticut district that has devoted much time and money to developing evaluation formats which more closely reflect current research. The evaluation formats in the Connecticut district also reflect the increased emphasis on connecting teacher evaluations to staff development.

The researcher interviewed four teachers and the principal (or assistant principal) at one secondary school in three of those four locations. In the fourth location, the suburban district in Massachusetts using the Saphier teacher evaluation format, contract negotiation issues influenced the principal to limit the researcher's access to her teachers. Thus, for the fourth system, the researcher gained entrance to another suburban district in Massachusetts that used the Saphier evaluation format. In trying to gain access to teachers, he could not control who wanted to participate in the study. Ideally, he would have liked to interview women and men who are tenured and non-tenured teachers. I suspected that gender and job security were two issues that can influence teachers' and principals' perspectives on the evaluation process. In reality, of the four principals, one was a woman, and all were veteran

administrators. Of the sixteen teachers interviewed, nine were women, and all but three of the participants were tenured.

The researcher's membership in numerous professional organizations facilitated his access to these principals and teachers. His familiarity with these groups minimized a problem of qualitative research, which is inadequate entry into the field work (Erickson, 1986). Many colleagues in western Massachusetts know him professionally and some even know of his interest in teacher evaluation. These relationships, although not close and personal, fostered more confidence and trust, and thus provided smoother access to the educators who were interviewed.

In spite of these perceived advantages, the researcher still needed to explain who he is, what he wanted to accomplish, and how he intended to accomplish that task. Thus, he sent a letter of introduction/explanation to each building principal. After gaining their support, he supplied a similar letter to the teaching staff to garner potential participants (Appendix A). Additionally, he needed to obtain "informed, written consent" (Seidman, 1991, p. 46) from participants. This consent form also informed the participants of any potential risks, their right to withdraw at any time and their right to review material. This consent form informed the participants about the issues of anonymity and pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Finally, the consent form informed participants about how the results will be disseminated and about any potential benefits the researcher might accrue. A copy of the informed consent form is located in Appendix B.

Data

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by a professional secretary. The raw data were labeled for organizational purposes and backup tapes were made for security. These steps attempted to maintain the integrity of the information and to prevent the loss of data. Additionally, having the data on audiotape facilitated data checking.

Rather than examining the data after completing each interview and risk the chance of imposing one participant's perspectives on another (Seidman, 1991, p. 86), the researcher completed all interviews prior to working with the data. During the next stage of the proposed study, he examined the data in the spirit of Goetz and LeCompte (1984), who said that in contrast to quantitative researchers, who "hope to find data to match a theory, inductive (qualitative) researchers hope to find a theory (or a theme) that explains their data (p. 4)."

Analysis

During this stage the researcher reviewed the hundreds of pages of transcribed data and culled out interesting and

compelling stories. Within this block of material he looked for a pattern of connecting events that arose from the data. These themes were coded, labeled, and organized for further review during the analysis stage of the study. As the researcher worked to condense the data, which contained the stories of the participants, he took care not to destroy the contextual nature of that material. Because of the number of teachers interviewed and the resulting large quantity of data, he chose to present the teachers' perspectives using a combination of emerging themes combined with an introductory profile. With only the interviews of four principals and the smaller amount of usable data, he chose to present the principals' perspectives using just the themes. The data also needed to be exposed to the inevitable criticisms that follow any research. Is the proposed study confirmable and trustworthy (valid and reliable)?

Earlier in this section, some of the differences between quantitative and qualitative research were discussed. These differences in the assumptions about reality and viewpoints of the world also translate into different conceptualizations of validity and reliability (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Lincoln and Guba (1985) even proposed using different terminology for qualitative research such as "truth value" or "transferability" to describe internal and external validity, and using "consistency" for reliability. The researcher was concerned

that the findings can be trusted by the consumers of research. The next section will address the issues of credibility, transferability, and replication.

Credibility deals with the ability to capture what is really there. Are the data from the interviews accurately representing the perspectives of all participants? The focus of a qualitative researcher, is on perspectives, not necessarily in absolute truths. Thus, the primary obligation is, as Taylor and Bogdan (1984) indicated, to "present a more or less honest rendering of how informants (participants) actually view themselves and their experiences (p. 98)." In order to uncover the experiences of my participants within the contexts of their lives in a way that demonstrated a high level of internal validity, the researcher employed the following strategies to enhance his ability to capture what is really there: member checks and long term observations.

One of the problems associated with qualitative research, as Erickson (1986) indicated, is the potential for faulty interpretations of evidence. Member checking, in which the participants have an opportunity to review transcriptions and continue discussions, is a way to increase the chances that the data accurately reflect what the participants wanted to say. In this study, the researcher offered each participant the tapes or transcriptions to add or withdraw material. Three

participants took advantage of the offer to review transcripts of portions of their interviews, and no discrepancies were found. Since some of the participants agreed to the accuracy of the data reconstructions, then credibility was increased (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Another strategy that increases credibility is long-term observations with participants. The three ninety minute interviews associated with phenomenological interviewing can generate up to 150 pages of data (Seidman, 1991). This volume of information can minimize another potential problem of qualitative research, that of inadequate data (Erickson, 1986). Additionally, the phenomenological interview format provides the researcher with several opportunities to interview the same participant. An examination of the data generated from the interviews can provide the researcher with insights into the honesty and believability of the participants (Seidman, 1991). The researcher's review of transcriptions revealed that many participants often told of similar events during the second and third interviews. The descriptions and terminology used led the researcher to believe in the authenticity of the participants' stories.

The ability to apply the findings of one study to other situations is termed transferability. In this qualitative perspective of viewing external validity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the researcher can improve the

validity by including a "thick description" so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment (pp. 124-125). The researcher attempted to provide this "thick description" in the formation of the themes generated from the interviews.

Replication refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be duplicated in another study. In qualitative research the replication of a study as a determination of reliability will pose problems not found in quantitative research. Replication, for example, can be affected by the role and relationship of the researcher (Smith, 1987). These variations reduce the chance that one researcher can exactly duplicate the action of another.

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 288) suggested replacing the term reliability with the "dependability" or "consistency" of the results obtained from the data. Instead of a researcher trying to get similar results from a study, the researcher should ask if his or her study makes sense in light of the data collected. In this study, the researcher used an audit trail to improve the dependability of my results. This included the details of how the data were collected, how the themes were derived, and how all decisions in the study were made. The methodology was presented so that a consistent format existed for any future studies.

Working with the Data

The interviews began in July of 1992 and concluded in May of 1993. The series of three interviews of each participant yielded from 60 to 100 double-spaced pages of data for each series of interviews, and I reviewed the material only after all three interviews were completed. I read the data several times before actually culling out the most interesting and compelling stories from each of the participants. This material was marked, labeled, and collated by the similarities or themes contained in the passages.

Chapter four focuses on the perspectives of teachers on teacher evaluations by using a profile of a teacher whose story illustrates the common themes raised by the other teachers, and concludes with a discussion of those themes. Chapter five, which focuses on the principals' perspectives, uses only the thematic approach. Because of fewer participants, the amount of usable data was relatively small. As such, the researcher did not want to limit material which could be used to support themes by using that data in a profile. In both chapters, the participants stories are represented exactly as taped with only minor adjustments for clarity and syntax.

All the names used are pseudonyms and the locations in both Massachusetts and Connecticut are identified only by

demographic description. This was done to protect the identity of the individuals and their districts.

C H A P T E R IV

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHER EVALUATION

Teachers know what works for them and they know what doesn't work. They know what they like, and they also know what they do not like. They know what is helpful, and they know what is not helpful. Within their vast assortment of perspectives, I found that the teachers in this study held similar thoughts and beliefs about certain aspects of teacher evaluations.

As an introduction to the themes synthesized from the interviews, this chapter will begin with a profile of one of the interviewed teachers. After reading all the transcriptions of the teachers' interviews, the researcher selected this teacher because her story seemed both interesting,compelling, and representative of the stories of the other teachers. The actual construction of this profile first involved selecting, marking, and labeling those excerpts which not only were attractive, but which also mirrored the kinds of experiences heard from the other teachers. In forming the profile from the transcripted material, the researcher used entire blocks of the participant's responses in order to maintain the continuity of the theme being expressed. These excerpts, which consisted of completed thoughts on individual themes, were woven together chronologically from her first year of teaching to the present.

This profile, as well as the selected excerpts from the other teachers, is composed almost entirely of the words of the participants. Occasionally, repetitious or unconnected material was omitted, and words added for clarity and readability. In making these changes, the researcher attempted to maintain an honest reflection of the meaning of the interviews.

The profile demonstrates that teachers form their perspectives on teacher evaluations from specific experiences in their lives, and not from isolated opinions with no supporting foundations. The words of this one teacher express similar thoughts and experiences of many other participants. Her profile shows an educator who experienced two very different evaluation formats with evaluators whose styles were quite different. She relays, through her experiences, the evaluation components that were successful, and those facets that created problems or negative feelings. She candidly offers specific reasons why certain strategies did not work with her, as well as suggestions to improve her evaluation involvement. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of her story focuses on her ambivalent feelings that her brief experiences with evaluations created.

Profile: Kathleen E.

Kathleen E. is a non-tenured Foreign Language teacher from a suburban Massachusetts high school, who

served as a first year teacher in two schools for two consecutive years. Excerpts from her interview follow:

> In my first year of teaching the procedure was a checklist type of evaluation in which my department head, the principal, and the assistant principal each came in. They had a series of deadlines that they had to meet, so they would come by and observe my class and give me an evaluation. I would then sign it. It was all standard procedure. I would say it was not a very helpful experience.
>
> What I found was, and it is something that I had a hard time with, you spend your whole student teaching semester with a revolving door in your classroom. Cooperating teachers, your supervisor, academic supervisor, everyone is in to observe you. What I found was that when you get your actual teaching job, they dump you in a classroom, and say, OK we gave you all this feedback last semester as a practice teacher but now you are on your own, and to me it was frustrating. I would end a class, and I would ask myself if it went well or didn't go well. What do I think? During my student teaching at the end of each class or during the passing time I found myself reviewing that class. Let me think about what I did. What

worked and what didn't work? I would always try to self-evaluate during the break between classes or at the end of the day. I would think about what I had done, and what I should do to improve certain activities, because I do so many different things during the class.

So I began self-evaluating even though I still received feedback from all those supervisors. My cooperating teacher gave me feedback, my education supervisor gave me feedback, and my French supervisor gave me feedback. It's interesting that I just thought it was me who noticed this difference in attention and I was talking with another first-year teacher and he said the exact same thing. He said that I end the class and I don't know if it went well or if it didn't go well. I want to ask the kids but it is hard for them to give feedback in certain respects. So I found it very frustrating my first year in that I was dumped into a classroom. I was ready to be in a classroom, but I was not getting the feedback that I had been accustomed to during my practice teaching.

What I also found was that the evaluation procedure of the school was not very helpful. For instance, during my practice teaching when a

department head came in, she made an appointment with me and she would come in for the entire class and observe me. Then a couple of days later I got the checklist that she checked off on a scale of 1 to 5. Then she also had written a small paragraph. During my first year teaching this changed. With my two administrators if the last day to observe me was October 10th, they were in my room on October 10th. They would walk in together, sit for 10 minutes and then leave. Then they would write up this little evaluation. I kind of felt like it was their obligation to come in and observe me, and that there wasn't a lot of value in it for them. I don't feel that they thought it was important. I think that they realized that they had to do it and they did it. They filled out the form and it was more of a duty in terms of getting the job done. To me it was kind of like a check-in. OK, you are teaching your class, good job, you're doing something. That's how I felt. They were never there for more than 10 minutes.

Part of what would have made a difference was having them come in and stay a bit longer. So they could see how I begin a class or how I end a

class. They were not there for the beginning or the end, just the middle. So that bothered me.

The way they approached me when it was time to sign the evaluation also bothered me. It was just handed to me and they said, "sign it". There was no discussion of what they saw. They could have at least said, "I enjoyed your class". There was no discussion or no questions. Sometimes they came in classes that I conducted in another language, and neither one of them spoke French. So that I would expect them to have some questions like what went on between you and that student? There was nothing. No requests for clarifying why I had done certain things, and no constructive criticism. I find it hard to believe that as a first-year teacher there wouldn't be some suggestions.

So I think the real evaluations ended with my practice teaching and then that was the end of it. So it was kind of frustrating my first year. I ended up doing a lot of self-evaluation, trying to figure out what worked, what didn't, and what bombed. There was another teacher who was a first-year teacher with me and what we ended up doing was kind of relying on each other. We ran things by each other, like I tried this today, or

this is what happened, or what do you think about this. So we really ended up relying on each other for feedback.

In my present position, I'm a first-year teacher for the second time in two years. Evaluations here are different, and I found them helpful. The principal set up an appointment with me to come in and observe. He arrived before the class began and stayed until the class was over. He took notes seriously throughout the whole period. At the end of four observations, I met with him and I went over his notes with him. He observed classes where I was using only French or Spanish, so he needed to kind of clarify what he had seen. At this point in some classes the kids were still speaking English, so he could kind of follow the class. In some of the classes the students don't speak English but he was still able to follow pretty much what was going on, but we sat and we went over his notes. He verified his notes with me. Now this is what you were doing at this point, right? Now what was the objective of this? What were you trying to do? He clarified exactly what he had observed, and then at the next appointment he had written the evaluation up in pencil. He and I read it over and agreed on it,

and then it would be typed up and I would come in and sign it. So I found this a large contrast to what I had gone through previously where they just put the sheet in your mailbox for you to sign. Here I felt I received constructive criticism, like when he told me that I favor the left side when I teach.

I know that happens and I could sense it, but I never could correct it. Once he said it, I said, "I think you're right but I've never really been sure". When I would think back over my classes for the day I would always picture the kids on the left side of the room. I could never picture the kids on the right side of the room and I would forget who sat over there. So I kind of put things together and said well that is a good point. I've since tried to correct that. I think that I did, because he didn't mention it again this year. There were other suggestions and things that I could improve on or do differently. So I found that much more helpful, and I also felt that although it is still an obligation to observe me the four times a year as a non-tenured teacher, I felt that it wasn't perceived as just an obligation or as a check-in.

Suggestions for change have to be logical, reasonable, and educationally based. For example, during my practice teaching one of my supervisors told me that I needed to make an opening statement to the class. This is what we are doing, like reciting the agenda for the class. He was very much into that, but I've never been able to do it. I couldn't do it as a student teacher. I could never remember to do it. This is awful, but in my first year teaching I liked the fact that I had the power to surprise them at any point in the class. I liked the power of giving the surprise and not letting them in on what we are doing today. Yes, power. When I switched schools my second year, I also started taking classes on the graduate level in Spanish, and I found that some days I would get frustrated with my college class because I wouldn't know what we were doing. I found myself bothered by this, but it never registered why it bothered me. It should have, because in the back of my head was my supervisor saying opening statement. I couldn't be bothered with that because I like the surprise factor. Now some of these college classes were bothering me and I really didn't know why. Then I was observed by my principal and he said that you have a very

busy agenda trying to do four or five different things. It's not like the kids come in to do one thing. So he said you have a good agenda, but it would be nice to see you begin the class by laying out the agenda for the class. This is what we are going to do today. This is how you need to begin the class. Whether or not this was true, I'm not sure. I came home and I thought about it, and it finally dawned on me one day that he is right, because the same thing was happening in my college class. I do need to make this opening statement because I'm getting frustrated. I have no idea what is coming. I've done the reading but I don't know what we are going to do with it. I don't know where it is going.

For me, because the suggestion was educationally based, I could relate to it, and it was reasonable. It can't take more than 30 seconds of the beginning of a class to briefly explain to the students we are going to do this and we are going to do that. I think it was very helpful because it also helps me because it organizes my mind for the class period. I think it makes things flow better for the students. They can anticipate what we are going to do so I feel that it has made my classes better.

I think this was a good evaluation experience for me, but I had a friend at work, and I don't know if I should discuss this, but she had a problem with her evaluation. She wasn't happy with her evaluation, so she confronted her administrator, and subsequently her evaluation was rewritten. Now granted the administrator may not have been aware of certain circumstances surrounding her background. There may have been some fogginess there, but based on her description of the confrontation with him, as soon as she confronted him, he began to make some concessions. I thought to myself, "what does this say about the evaluation procedure?" If I've been teaching for twenty years and I am observed and I get this rotten evaluation, and I don't like it, can I demand it be rewritten? That bothered me!

I strongly believe in teachers being evaluated throughout their career because I think people change a lot over the course of their teaching. It bothered me to think that well, what if somebody has been teaching for X number of years and no longer is doing a good job, and if they're not doing a good job, they're not going to like their evaluation. So if you get this poor evaluation, why should it be rewritten? It

> bothered me that it could be that easy to be rewritten. It said to me there probably isn't a lot of that checking on teachers that the school system is always claiming. Teachers are evaluated every year and it struck me that yeah, maybe they are evaluated every year, but is it a valid evaluation, or is it just looking through rose-colored glasses?

Kathleen's pre-service experience provided opportunities for her to receive feedback from her supervisors. By her accounts, this information was needed and valued. At her first teaching position, however, her principal did not provide her with a similar level of feedback. This lack of information created a void in her ability to measure the impact of her lessons on her students. The difference in the quality and quantity of supervision between her practice teaching experience and her actual teaching position left Kathleen very frustrated with the evaluation process and with her evaluator.

In her second teaching position, Kathleen felt more satisfaction with the evaluation process and with her evaluator. She received feedback from the classroom observations, which she believed was useful. She also indicated that her new evaluator dedicated more time to the evaluation process, which made her feel more comfortable. In spite of her positive experiences with teacher

evaluations in her new position, she encountered another inconsistency in the evaluation process. This issue, which dealt with an administrator's credibility, created new doubts about the teacher evaluation process for Kathleen.

Kathleen's story is an account of her experiences with the teacher evaluation process, which illustrates the unique nature of her experience. In spite of this uniqueness, however, other participants in this study recalled experiences which resulted in the formation of similar beliefs about the teacher evaluation process. Teachers believe their evaluations should provide feedback, reinforcement, and growth. Teachers in this study also believe that effective evaluators must command their respect, and that successful evaluations must demonstrate credibility. Finally, teachers retained negative reflections of the teacher evaluation process more vividly, in spite of the fact that most of the participants had an overall positive view of their experiences with teacher evaluations. They spoke about carelessness on the part of principals, manipulative behaviors by administrators, weak or inflated evaluations, and perfunctory approaches by principals towards the evaluation process. This section will present those recurring themes as reflected by the actual experiences of teachers.

Feedback

Teachers need feedback about their teaching, and in fact, welcome the opportunity to receive additional information about their classroom performance (Harris, 1986). A study by Seyfarth and Nowinski (1987) showed that teachers did not receive as much feedback from administrators as they wanted. Teachers believe that receiving feedback indicates that their evaluator (usually the principal) paid attention to what was going on in the class. On the other side, a lack of discussion about classroom observations by the principal leaves the teacher feeling less satisfied about the process.

While teachers expressed the desire to receive follow-up or suggestions on classroom observations, the intensity or need for that feedback varied depending upon prior experiences with the teacher evaluation process. Teachers who experienced evaluation formats that included opportunities for evaluator feedback wanted that process to continue or even to expand. Teachers who never received any form of evaluator feedback seemed starved for attention. Their expectations of dialogue from their principals were lower, and in fact, some even seemed content with any kind of conversation about the classroom observation. Judy B., a veteran teacher from a rural Massachusetts high school, expressed her needs for follow-up in this way:

> I think they (principals) have to come out and say I'd like to see some improvement here or I'd like to see you try and do things differently because I think you might be happier, you might be more successful, etc. Give some suggestions and I think follow-up. It doesn't have to be heavy-handed follow-up, but just some follow-up. I really think having some sort of post-conference is effective, but I'm skeptical about the pre-conference.

Judy B. wanted to hear some comments from her evaluator. Further probing by the researcher revealed that she had experienced many years of evaluations that did not include any follow-up or discussion from her principal. At this point in time, Judy welcomed any feedback or chance for discussion with her evaluator. Kathy F., a teacher from a suburban Connecticut secondary school, was more specific and demanding about her desire for evaluation feedback. As a result of working in a state which instituted teacher evaluation reform in 1987 with the addition of statewide teacher competencies, Kathy experienced more rigorous evaluations. As such, her expectations from her evaluator and from the evaluation process differed from the previous participant. She expressed herself this way:

> For me what I would like to see happen as a result of evaluation is I would like to see myself

become more reflective of what I do and why I do it. There have been times that I would do a lesson because it was the next chapter in the book, or the curriculum dictated it. You have to work with the curriculum, but I didn't consciously think about why am I doing this. What influence will it have on the children? What's the best way for this lesson to be presented? And how will the children be able to absorb this knowledge and apply it to other things? So I really hadn't reflected as much about why I was doing things in the classroom. I just did them.

So I would like to see my evaluation with whomever is evaluating me to be a mutual reflective kind of thing. I think it would be more valuable to see my evaluator sit down with me and talk about the lesson that I was going to do. Talk about how it would be best to do it. Mutually share ideas about that. Then he could come in and script the lesson. But I think a nicer thing to do would be to tape the lesson and he and I both watch it together and talk about it together, and say when you did that maybe it would have been better if you did this, and then I can really look at myself. Because you don't look at yourself when you are doing it (teaching). Even

> though somebody scripts the lesson, and they come back and say where you did something or said something, it's not the same as seeing yourself doing it.

Even though their expectations about feedback differed, all of the teachers wanted to meet with their evaluators to discuss their evaluations. They desired more than just the written evaluation; they wanted feedback about the evaluation from their principals. Some teachers even suggested that conferencing after the observation could be further enhanced if there was dialogue between the teacher and principal before the actual classroom visitation. These teachers believed that the principal should use this meeting to explain the evaluation process and become more familiar with that teacher. Arlene T., a veteran teacher from a rural high school in Massachusetts, expressed her need for feedback this way:

> I guess I would sit down and talk to the principal about who I am and how I function as a teacher. So when the principal came in he would be looking for what I really am and how I really project and how I really perform. So I guess I would like to see the principal have a clear handle on my teaching ability and my teaching style, so that when they come in, I'm not trying to look to see what they want to see. For that

to happen I think there needs to be more dialogue between principals and teachers prior to the first evaluation. Maybe a goal-setting meeting and kind of a session to explain their point of view and for me to explain mine.

You know I'm very structured, so I can let loose here, but I can't be loose here, because I won't be comfortable. Then when they come in I think what would be helpful would be to have immediate feedback after the lesson if possible. I know that is hard because of the schedule. I do understand that part of it, but what has always been more helpful to me is that after I've gotten observed, to be called in right away. It's fresh in my mind, and I know what they are talking about. It just makes the dialogue clearer when that happens.

Arlene wanted pre-evaluation dialogue with her principal so that she might have a clearer picture of who she was and how she functioned. She believed that the additional insights gathered from interactions with her principal would provide a better understanding of her teaching behaviors. She also wanted feedback about her teaching as soon as possible, so that she and her evaluator could more clearly discuss the observation data.

Frequent collaborative discussions between principals and teachers foster a more open and trusting relationship (Bolton, 1973). Several participants echoed the notion of principals participating in more frequent dialogue with teachers about the evaluation process. They claim that these meetings, especially before the observation, would result in more positive evaluations for teachers by providing a forum for mutual discussion.

Positive Reinforcement

Another frequently mentioned issue in the evaluation process is the need for the evaluator to give positive reinforcement. The notion that teachers respond more favorably to a positive approach was reinforced by McGregor (1960) when he indicated that "judgments which are positive can perhaps be communicated effectively" (p.84). The belief that positive reinforcement is a necessary component of the teacher evaluation process was expressed in various ways. Some teachers looked at positive reinforcement as something to make them feel good about who they are and what they are doing. Greg W., a non-tenured teacher from a rural Massachusetts high school, linked the positive reinforcement he received to his growing reputation in his school. He expressed that issue this way:

> My first evaluation was pretty thorough after I saw it. It was three pages with whatever I wrote on the board and all the teaching methods

that I used within the period. It was a pretty positive one because I did three major things within that period, and the class went very smooth. I went through a lot of stuff, and the kids were on task. Now the evaluation wasn't that helpful, it was just nice to know, especially being in a new place, that I could teach the way that they wanted me to teach. I mean it was kind of like a reinforcement. I finally had a piece of paper that said yes, you are doing a good job. That was good because I think that it made me go home and say I have to keep this up. Now I have a reputation of being a good teacher. Now I have to maintain that.

Tenured and non-tenured teachers expressed a desire for positive comments in the evaluation. This view was supported by Lewis (1971) when he stated that telling a teacher he/she is doing a poor job will not provide the necessary motivation to get him/her to improve his/her performance. Arlene T, who earlier spoke about feedback, stated, "Everybody likes a compliment. Everybody likes to feel good about what they are doing. I always sort of feel high after I get them because they have always been positive for me. So it makes me feel good for a short time." This sounded very similar to Shelly Q's feelings about positive

reinforcement. This second-year teacher from a suburban Massachusetts high school expressed herself this way:

> I think evaluation provides some sort of feedback. I mean you have somebody there writing down everything that goes on in your class, and you discuss it afterwards. You are made aware of things that you weren't aware of before or like in my case, I have had real positive evaluations, so I guess it was a source or kind of a compliment to my teaching. It secured me as far as my teaching went. Not only did I feel good about my teaching, but somebody else told me I did a good job, and that made me feel good. At least I was on the right track.

Growth

Some teachers, however, distinguished between just feeling good about the results of a positive evaluation, and actually striving for professional growth. Prior experiences and individual comfort levels with the evaluation process form the foundation for teachers' perspectives in this area. Steve, a veteran teacher from a suburban Connecticut system, insisted on growth as a necessary component of an evaluation system. He summarized his feelings this way:

> Up to this point, evaluation hasn't been much more than a pat on the back, and that's nice.

It's nice to feel wanted and it's nice to feel that you are doing a fairly decent job, but it doesn't lead to improvement. You are as good as you were when the day you started, and if you were good, you continued to be good or you hopefully continued to be good, but you really don't improve. When you go back and look at my evaluation folders you are not going to see any progress. You are going to see evaluations that said Steve W. was a good-to-excellent teacher here, but you are not going to see anybody say Steve W. could improve if he did this and at the next point Steve W. has made a lot of improvement here and we have agreed that the next step is this. Nobody has gotten down and picked the process apart and said OK this is fine and this is good and maybe this is exceptional, but you could take it one step further if you went here.

Teachers who viewed evaluations as containing potential to encourage pedagogical growth differed in their expectations. Sometimes this growth is the result of an evaluator making a teacher aware of behavior that may have gone unnoticed by the teacher. Judy B., a veteran teacher from a rural Massachusetts high school, viewed growth this way:

I think evaluation on one level, maybe emotionally or philosophically, means growth. When you are talking about growth, there is always the negative side that means. . .not negative, but growth means you are not perfect. No one is perfect, but I think that any type of criticism can be taken in an odd fashion by a person. I think a lot of times we take comments as criticisms. Maybe I'm speaking too generally, but I know I would take it that way. I've been trying not to, but I realize that I personalize more than I have to in some of those instances. I think if evaluation is done as a commentary and you realize that, then I think you can take the comments a bit easier. For me, any type of evaluation is something that makes me think. Whether it's good or bad, I reflect on what I'm doing. If someone says that you walked across the room and spoke to three students, that's something you might not be aware of and I think that can be beneficial. I don't think it has to be a criticism.

For Judy and other teachers, the evaluator's observations of teacher behavior in the classroom serve as the focal point for their potential growth. These teachers are willing to accept one-way communication from the evaluator, and to reflect on that information. Other

teachers, who also believe that the evaluation process can help to improve their teaching skills, require a more collaborative approach with their evaluator. In order to minimize their defensiveness about what they may perceive as criticisms, and to comfortably accept the input from their evaluator, some teachers need ownership in the evaluation format. The notion of teacher involvement as a necessary ingredient in successful evaluations is reinforced by Wise, Darling-Hammond, Berstein, and Harriet (1984). Their study for the National Institutes of Education shows a powerful correlation between teacher involvement and successful evaluation formats. Kathy F. wants to participate in the process and provided her perspective on teacher involvement this way:

> You don't look at yourself when you are doing it (teaching). Even though somebody scripts it and they come back and say you did this, it's not the same as seeing yourself doing it. If you could find the time to do that (videotape), I think that it would help me to grow. By viewing myself on the tape, or us mutually talking about that, we could come up with some things because everyone has strong points and weak points. I'm sure that way, we could both mutually come up with some things that would be appropriate for me to better myself in. Instead of you coming in and

> saying I don't think you are doing this, which automatically, because of who I am, makes me defensive. But if we sit down and come to that together then it's part of me and I won't be defensive because I'm thinking we arrived at it together. And if you are good enough, you are going to get me to do what you want anyway (laughter).

While the intensity of the need to be more involved in the evaluation process varies among teachers, there was agreement among participants that teacher evaluations can be a growth experience. Teachers view their participation as a necessary component for growth need to feel as though they are an integral part of the evaluation process. Those teachers who hold a narrower view of collaboration feel that growth can occur with reduced levels of teacher involvement.

Other recurring themes from teachers' stories about their experiences in teacher evaluations center around their perceptions of respect and believability towards the evaluator or the evaluation process. The recognition that these feelings exist and profoundly impact teachers provides a greater depth of understanding of how teachers react to their evaluations.

Respect

For most of the participants, the issue of respect for their evaluators was linked to their feelings of confidence

towards their evaluators. A variety of factors can influence those feelings. Swender's (1985) study revealed that the personality of the principal influences teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process. Turchetti's (1989) work showed administrative ineptness and inconsiderate behavior caused dissatisfaction among teachers. Disliking the principal or perceiving negative behaviors by that person can affect the potential success of the evaluation process. If teachers, however, respect their principal's professional performance on evaluations or other educational matters, they allow those perceptions to influence their reactions to the evaluation process. While some teachers found it difficult to separate personal feelings from professional acceptance, other teachers did not have that difficulty. Steve W. separated his personal and professional feelings about a principal this way:

> I think that if I respect a person's professional ability I will listen to them more. Liking them makes no difference. I had a principal that had me write up my own evaluation. I mean, I didn't have any respect for that. I didn't even take the evaluation seriously because I did it myself. I mean I tried to be objective and everything like that as far as writing it up but I could have put down anything I wanted. I don't have any respect for the person, but I liked

> the person. He evaluated me and his evaluations were glowing and everything. I like him, but I don't respect him as an educator or administrator. He was one of the worst I ever taught for, but we are still friends and he still calls me.

While the issue of respect for Steve focused on his judgments of the principal's performance in the specific area of evaluations, other teachers held a more expansive perspective. These teachers believed that all parts of the principal's job affected the issue of respect, and not just those aspects that focused on evaluations. Sandy S, a veteran teacher from a suburban school district in Connecticut, respects educators whose performance mirrors their espoused beliefs. "If I saw a person who did their job very well, including a house master or principal, then if they did their job well then I felt they were in a position to judge my job." Arlene T. also believes that a principal's behaviors must reflect her/his spoken words in order for her to maintain respect for that individual. She voiced her opinion this way:

> I don't think I could give you a straightforward answer on how I would react to what my boss said about me or my teaching because a lot has to do with how I respect the individual as an individual. If I don't think they do a good job as principal, I would have a hard time

> respecting other things they could do. I would have a hard time with that. If I respect the person, I tend to put more stock in what they say because I think they look at themselves as to how they're perceived professionally.

A lack of training in and understanding of evaluation practices may cause the observing administrators to behave with a lack of confidence (Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). This visible discomfort in performing evaluations leads teachers to believe their evaluators lack sufficient understanding of the classroom. Some teachers believed that respect came from an evaluator's understanding of what was going on in the class. Chris S., a teacher in an urban high school in Massachusetts stated, "From my point of view the evaluator has to have some idea of what I'm doing. If they don't, I don't respect what they are saying and I don't place any stock in it". In describing her practice teaching experience, Shelly Q also raised the issue of the evaluator's understanding of what she was trying to do. She expressed herself this way:

> It was kind of a game. I would try everything that he (college supervisor) did suggest but time and time again I felt it wasn't going to work and it didn't work. This was reinforced at the end when I started using other people's suggestions over his. I bounced a lot of

> things off my cooperating teacher. I asked her to evaluate me instead of him because she was working in that area and I respected her opinion more.

Most teachers addressed this issue by correlating their respect for the evaluator to some personal or professional standards. If their evaluator met expectations, which may not even be linked to the evaluation process, that person gained the teacher's respect. The deciding issue may have been linked to the evaluator's treatment of students, the amount of knowledge in a particular content area, or overall job performance. Teachers respond more positively to evaluations from evaluators they respect.

Credibility

Another issue for teachers focused on the credibility of the evaluations or the evaluator. Teachers expressed concern about the credibility of the evaluation process and a connection to content area preparation of their evaluator. This group of teachers believed that their evaluator, who was usually a principal, must have some knowledge of the subject matter in order to be effective. Dave M., a French teacher in an urban high school in Massachusetts, expressed his concern about his evaluator's lack of expertise in French in this manner:

> From his training, I'm not sure that you would know that he would be qualified to supervise in the academic field, other than to say that this

> teacher can control a classroom. He has no expertise in my field. When I got my evaluations with 3's, 4's, and 5's, it made no logical sense to me. It appeared that he picked out a 3 out of the air and put it in this box, whether it was my strong point or weak point. He put a 5 in another box without any real consistent correlation between the 3 and 5 that I could see, and he never really explained it to me.

Chris S. is a teacher in the same urban high school as Dave M. He expressed a similar concern about the same evaluator in this way:

> The last time that I was evaluated was by a man that had just become an administrator. He worked in a vocational education department for his whole career. He worked in a machine shop with small groups. I couldn't really see how he could evaluate me in a physical education type setting anymore than I could go to his machine shop and watch him teach and know if he was doing a good job. I think that is one of the problems of being evaluated by someone that maybe has never done that job.

Kevin K., also a teacher in that urban high school in Massachusetts, believes that an evaluator must have some

expertise in his field in order to provide him with useful and meaningful suggestions:

> I'm comfortable with my teaching. What I would like to see is somebody that is in my field that knows what the heck is going on. I mean, when they send people in who have never taught my subject, they probably don't even know what you're talking about. I have been told before, look this is what you should be doing. Try this. If somebody says that to me, and doesn't know anything about Health, I'd say you really aren't well-versed in this area. I'd have a problem with that. If the person was a health educator in the area longer than me, and if I thought she/he was a good teacher, I would love to have suggestions. That would be great. I would even like the idea of having me go out and visit another school. It would be kind of neat to watch what other health teachers do. That's where I'd get more information than anywhere else. What are they doing?

The content area background of the evaluator is an important factor in the credibility and usefulness of evaluations for those three teachers. In their view, an evaluator earns credibility by having a similar academic background. Other teachers, however, are more concerned

that their evaluator's feedback fall within their areas of acceptance. For these teachers, the issue of credibility is not defined by their evaluator's background as much as by their acceptance of their evaluator and his/her feedback.

Kathy F. believes that she is her own best evaluator and a discriminating consumer of evaluation feedback. She expressed herself this way:

> I guess I feel that I'm my best evaluator. I know what I do well and what I don't do well. I brought this behavior modification thing up because that is a strong point for me. It's something that I do a good job on. If I had really done a lousy job on my behavior modification and I hadn't followed through with this kid, then I would be receptive to criticism. If I really knew that I had done a good job on something, and the administrator still wanted me to beat that horse, I would have a problem with it.

Kathy F. has enough confidence in her teaching ability to completely reject an evaluator's suggestion which runs contrary to her beliefs. While not as strongly stated, other teachers expressed similar feelings about the relationship of their acceptance levels to the evaluator or the evaluator's suggestions. Shelly Q. takes information

more seriously if it comes from an administrator who knows what is going on in her class.

> I think that if somebody is a good administrator or teacher who knows what is going on in my class then I place stock in what they're saying. I have had people make suggestions, and they have no idea what is going on. They make suggestions about the classroom, but this idea would never work outside on the playing field. These are two different situations. I think that if someone understands that, then I take them more seriously.

Kathleen E., also a non-tenured teacher in the same suburban high school, connects the credibility of evaluations to her relationship with her evaluators:

> If someone really wanted me to do something that I really didn't believe in, I don't know if I would. My tendency is to say that I might not. I think that it would probably depend on the situation with the supervisor, the principal. My relationship with the administration and with my department head would somehow back me up. I would have a hard time incorporating something in my classroom that I wouldn't believe in. I think you can't do something if you don't believe in it.

The believability of the evaluator or of the contents of the evaluation is important to the perceived effectiveness of the teacher evaluation process. When evaluators possess a similar content background as the teachers who are being evaluated, the results are more believable. Additionally, if the evaluator's feedback falls within the teachers' levels of acceptance, the evaluation data are also more believable.

The feelings of teachers in the areas of respect and believability are important factors in the potential success of the teacher evaluation process. They frame the outer boundaries of a teacher's "zone of acceptance" (Ashbough & Kaster, 1987) in the evaluation process. In order to more fully understand these needs and feelings expressed by teachers, I will present the more passionately expressed evaluation experiences of my teacher participants.

Negative Reflections

While nearly all of the teachers in this study indicated overall positive feelings towards teacher evaluations, most all participants experienced some negativity associated either with an evaluator or with the evaluation process. These negative encounters were smaller in number, but evoked more intense responses. Some teachers experienced carelessness, or even manipulative behaviors by principals. They also were victimized by weak or inflated evaluations, and perfunctory approaches by principals

towards the evaluation process. The depth of their anger or disappointment with their evaluator correlated with their experience. While neglecting behaviors by principals caused teachers to feel ignored, perceived incompetence with the evaluation process evoked bitter and angry responses.

Carelessness

Teachers used a variety of terms to describe the administrative oversights they encountered during their evaluation experiences. Judy B. characterized the laxity or carelessness of administrators as "benevolent neglect". Sue W., a reading teacher in a suburban Connecticut secondary school, used the expression, "rose-colored glasses" in reference to deficiencies in her principal's evaluations. Not all teachers, however, were as forgiving. Joy B. expressed annoyance at her principal's lack of preparation and understanding in this manner:

> Lecturing is an important component, and it is another way of weaving together equally varied tasks and other items which students have undertaken. These lectures were carefully introduced to my classes on March 16th. He came in on the 17th, and he said my material, which I Xeroxed from a highly reputable source, seemed to be incomplete. He had not done his homework, and that annoys me. He never bothered to find out what went on the period before.

In the view of teachers, administrators not only demonstrate neglectful behaviors, but sometimes are too timid in dealing with teachers. Poor evaluation training and the resulting discomfort can lead to evaluations filled with vague generalities (Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985). This lack of administrator confidence in evaluating evokes a variety of teacher reactions. Steve W. believes that some principals purposely avoid being critical, even when it is appropriate. He stated the following:

> In college when you are student teaching there is always someone that is critical of you and making suggestions. When you get out into teaching, many administrators are perhaps hesitant to do things like that. They might feel they are stepping on someone's toes. You know, it is very difficult to evaluate your peers or your friends. So they tell everybody they are doing a good job. Do they really think you're doing a good job or do they really feel that way? If they are telling everybody they are doing a good job, then it doesn't mean anything anymore.

Manipulative Behaviors

Other teachers believed that the negativity associated with evaluations was not due to administrative carelessness, but rather to a conscious decision on the part of the principal. This administrative decision-making sometimes

resulted in very negative evaluations. Kiley's (1988) study reported that teachers saw principal bias, inconsistency, subjectivity, and focus on trivial issues as the worst aspects of evaluation. Sandy S., a veteran teacher from a suburban Connecticut high school, believes she was treated very unfairly through the evaluation process. She explained her experience this way:

> Before I moved to my present position I was teaching in a middle school and there was a very dishonest situation. If you read files on evaluations you would think I was the worst teacher that walked the face of the earth. No matter what I was asked to do, it was still wrong. They would say that we know she does such and such in the classroom, but we don't see it. This is where I went in and said come in every day if you want. It's a perception. I know that perceptions can be very real, but you can also feed on the perceptions. I think they actually encouraged different things with students and parents. I think there was actually some evidence of collusion on different instances. It could end up as a legal thing where I was set up. I went through several years like that before I moved to the high school situation. There are strong feelings with people to the point where there were

screaming matches. I told an evaluator what I thought of him. I said something like "to be honest with you you're slime. You go over, around, and through anybody you want. You're very dishonest. You're a snake".

While Sandy was convinced that her evaluators manipulated the evaluation process dishonestly to try to get rid of her, Arlene T. experienced a situation in which administrators used evaluations to retain teachers:

> My former system went to an evaluation system which was a fourteen page document and you got a one-word rating, outstanding, very good, good, and poor. After fourteen pages of checklists, you got one word. The first year he gave me an outstanding rating. I was one of thirty people to get it. That year the ratings were used to dismiss teachers. It was a year before Prop 2½ hit. What happened was that all the fairs and poors were given lay-off notices. We had a clause in our contract to retain those most proficient or whatever, but not seniority. All things being equal, then we would go to seniority. So they used that and the principals got a lot of grief because there were some senior teachers who were being asked to leave, when some younger ones weren't.

So the next year, over one hundred teachers ended up getting outstanding ratings. Everyone jumped that year. So I went to the principal and I looked him straight in the eye and said to him that I felt insulted. I worked hard for that rating. As far as I'm concerned you didn't have the courage to use the evaluation the way it was meant. It took people who really worked hard and who took pride in the profession, and made it a joke. You are just rewarding incompetence. He didn't want to address it with me. I said I want you to look me in the eye and I want you to tell me that everybody in the school deserves an outstanding rating. And he did, he looked me in the eye and said that everybody deserves an outstanding rating.

Kathleen E. believes that teachers should be evaluated, and was very concerned about what she perceived as a manipulation of the evaluation process that occurred at her first teaching position. Although this excerpt appears in the beginning of the chapter in the introductory profile, it remains a compelling story which supports this theme. She expressed that experience this way:

> I don't know if I should discuss this but a friend of mine had a tough evaluation year. She wasn't happy with her evaluation, so she

confronted the administrator on it. Subsequently her evaluation was rewritten. There is some fogginess there, but based on her description of the confrontation with him, it sounded like the minute she confronted him, there was a beginning of concessions. And I thought to myself, what does this say about the evaluation procedure? If I have been teaching for twenty years and I am observed and I get this rotten evaluation, and I don't like it, can I demand that it be rewritten? That bothered me, because I strongly believe in teachers being evaluated. All teachers need to be evaluated throughout their experience because I think people change a lot over the course of their teaching. What if someone has been teaching X number of years and no longer is doing a good job? What if you're not doing a good job, and you get evaluated? Obviously you aren't going to like your evaluation, but why should it be rewritten?

As a new teacher, Kathleen wanted to believe in the integrity and fairness of the evaluation process, but this negative experience early in her career caused her to cast doubts on the ability of the evaluation process to work properly. While Kathleen's perspective was influenced by the ease with which evaluations can be rewritten to look

more complimentary, other teachers spoke about their encounters with cursory or bloated evaluations.

Weak/Inflated Evaluations

Many teachers believe that evaluations are positive or complimentary on the surface, but are in reality superficial or unrealistic. Three teachers made brief but definitive statements on this issue. Steve W. stated that "My evaluations were glowing. So I don't even remember them. I just put them in a file, because there is not much to them." Judy B. said "Some of the evaluations done by this one principal were in many respects very complimentary, but superficial. There wasn't a lot of depth or meaning behind it." Arlene T. stated that "I have found them to be a general description of what you do well, and nothing really substantial to look at myself in depth about." Most teacher's stories are sprinkled with similar comments about their experiences with evaluations. Chris S. talked about his experience and concludes that evaluations state positive comments, but are not really helpful. He relayed his story this way:

> It has been my experience that I never really got a whole lot out of the evaluation process. I think more or less it seems to be my feeling that they perceive you as doing a good job on a day-to-day basis. When it comes time for the one or two evaluations of the year, you pretty much got the

top of the evaluation scale. I remember one instance my first year. I'm pretty sure I got excellent or superior. It was the top thing. I had superiors everywhere and one very good. The evaluator said that I couldn't give you all superiors because nobody would believe it. So, it has been my opinion not to really take that much stock in any evaluations that I have had. You would like to believe that you are outstanding in what you do, but I think that everybody at some point can have a bit of improvement.

Kevin K. also experienced inflated but useless comments by principals in three different schools in his school district. He told this story:

> I didn't know that I was that good. It was absolutely amazing. The evaluation form used excellent, good, fair, and poor. I had just about all excellents. That's pretty good. Wow! My first year teaching, all excellents. It was actually amazing. The assistant principal was the one that visited my class, but I didn't meet with him. I met with the principal, and all he did was put a piece of paper in front of me and said, "Here, sign it. Look at it if you want". I looked at it and I was an amazing teacher. Not quite as good as the first school. I had all

> excellents and goods. I don't remember anything specific in the evaluation in this school. But I do remember thinking at one point that the principal was trying to build up my ego. I heard that before from other teachers that felt the same way. He just gets carried away writing all these great things about you. You do this marvelous job, but he never pinpointed any weak points at all. Never said anything.

Kevin K's story typifies the experience of several other teachers from his school, who have largely been ignored by teacher evaluation practices in their district. He offered these other experiences:

> Well, my first year of teaching I figured that somebody would be in there sometime, and I became confused by this because I came from the business world. In IBM you're evaluated quite a bit. The managers at IBM were on top of everyone so they knew exactly what you were doing. We had auditors who came into our office and would go over all our work to make sure that people were doing their jobs the correct way. If you weren't, you got written up in the audit. If you were written up for not doing your job or not being efficient, you weren't going to last long. After

coming from an environment like that, I was shocked that nobody had ever been in my classroom.

I was teaching in my first year, and quite honestly, I didn't want to rock the boat. I mean I was non-tenured. I didn't know what would happen if all of a sudden I said how come nobody is in my classroom? I didn't want to get on the bad side of the principal, because if you get on the bad side of a principal in. . .because they ran their school like a dictator, they could have you bounced out, or put you somewhere else. They can do whatever they want with your schedule. So I kind of just shut my mouth.

As far as teacher evaluations go, my first two years teaching at a middle school or junior high school, I was not evaluated at all. No one ever stepped foot into my classroom. They had built an evaluation form for me. They had things checked off. It was a great evaluation, but no one had ever been into my class to watch me teach. All he knew was that I didn't send anyone down to the assistant principal, and he was happy about that. I didn't want this guy to think I was going to be a pain in the rear. I wanted to make sure that I got hired next year.

> My evaluations at the other junior high school consisted of two visits for maybe five minutes each. An assistant principal would come into my classroom, just watch for five minutes, and then leave. At the end of the week, the principal would call you down to show you your evaluation. Every time I had a good evaluation. I simply signed it and that was the end of it. In the high school where I have been for three years, I've been evaluated once so far.

Perfunctory Approaches

Another common theme among the teachers centers around the perfunctory nature of the evaluation process. These teachers perceived that their evaluators were merely completing a required, but unimportant task. Teachers experienced principals who would continue to make the same comments year after year about their teaching, or principals who approached the evaluation process indifferently. Kathy F. described her perceptions of the casual nature of the evaluation process this way:

> It was just pop in once or twice a year. He would sit in the back of the room and then he would go and write that Mrs. F. continues to do an outstanding job. We are pleased to have her in the building. It was kind of. . .he went through this motion, and it didn't change anything. He

did what he did, and I did what I did, and that was it. It really had no influence on me personally.

Mary G., a teacher in an urban high school in Massachusetts, experienced an indifferent approach by her principal. She shared her experience this way:

> According to our contract, as I understand it, the principal should sit with the teacher and discuss a time that would be most appropriate and talk about things that the teacher would like observed and the principal would like observed. They come to an agreement and those observations should be done three times before the final evaluation is written-up. Last year was the first time in sixteen or seventeen years they even came close. Even the last two observations were done when I had the students putting on a luncheon for some of the staff. It was kind of like she could kill two birds with one stone. She could have her lunch and evaluate me. Obviously her attention wasn't focused on me. She was kind of pushed for time to get the evaluations done by the end of the year.
>
> I have had principals come in for less than five minutes and that was their yearly evaluation of me. In my first two years of teaching the

principal never came in. The third year before tenure, I got a new principal and he came in for less than ten minutes. In fact, I'd never seen him in my class before, so I asked him if there was something wrong, because it never occurred to me that he was in my room to observe me. He wasn't even sure of my name and would mix me up with the other Home Ec. teacher.

Kathleen E., who was the subject of the profile at the beginning of the chapter, shared this experience on the perfunctory nature of evaluations:

> The evaluation procedure of the school was not very helpful. What I found with the two administrators was that if the last day to observe me was October 10, they were in my room on October 10th. They would walk in together, sit for ten minutes and leave. Then they would write up this little evaluation, and then I would sign it and that would be it. It would say nice things like what a nice teacher, blah, blah, blah. Nothing helpful in it. I kind of felt it was their obligation to come in and observe me, and that there really wasn't a lot of value in it for them. I didn't feel that it was valuable at all, but I don't feel that they thought it was important either. I think that they realized that they had

to do it. It was more of a duty to get the job done. I didn't feel they were genuinely interested in coming in and observing me. To me, it was kind of like a check-in. OK, you're teaching your class, you're doing something. They were never there for more than 10-15 minutes. That would have part of what would have made the difference, to have them come in and stay a bit longer. They were not there for the beginning or end of the class. They were there for the middle of the class, so that bothered me. It was just hand this to me, read it over, and sign it. There was no discussion of what they saw. It might have been just a token job, but they just said I enjoyed your class. There was no discussion, or no questions. There was nothing. There were no requests for clarifying why I had done certain things, and no constructive criticism. I find it hard to believe that as a first-year teacher there wouldn't be some suggestions.

Teachers want to experience meaningful and satisfying evaluations; nevertheless, they feel frustration and disappointment with the process. Most of the frustration is directed towards their evaluators, whom teachers believe are responsible for the current status of evaluations. The careless or neglectful behaviors, the inability or

unwillingness of principals to make assertive decisions, and perfunctory approaches to evaluations all surface from these stories. The teachers' view of evaluations, however, does not include an understanding of the principals' positions on this issue. A clearer picture of teacher evaluations requires the perspectives of administrators to add fairness and balance to such a complex process. The next chapter will present the stories from four principals and the resulting themes which were extracted from their experiences about the teacher evaluation process.

C H A P T E R V

PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHER EVALUATION

In most school districts, the daily responsibilities of a principal differ greatly from those of the teachers (McGreal, 1983). While the teacher's primary function revolves around the regular and sometimes more predictable interactions with their students, the principal's role is more expansive and not so easily defined. In spite of the lack of specificity about their job-related tasks, the principals in this study believed evaluating teachers to be very important. While their job also includes building and grounds maintenance, budget formation and management, teacher and student scheduling, various meetings with parent groups, attendance at extra-curricular events, student discipline, and a multitude of other responsibilities, they never lost sight of the crucial role effective teacher evaluations play in the education of their students.

In spite of their beliefs about the importance of performing effective teacher evaluations, the realities of their jobs force principals to make choices about what they must do at any given time during their work day. This prioritizing involves such variables as the school district's philosophy, the school building's mission, the principal's strengths and weaknesses, and other circumstances that create very individualized day-to-day activities for principals. This was the case with the

principals who participated in this study. In spite of the variety of circumstances that might result in vast differences in how these principals perceive their jobs, this researcher found areas of common concern about teacher evaluations, which will be presented in a thematic format.

These four principals served in secondary schools in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Carl works in a suburban Connecticut district in a school with nearly a thousand students. He started his career as a teacher in Massachusetts and moved to this Connecticut district fifteen years ago. He has been a principal in his school for the past ten years. The other three principals are from school districts in Massachusetts. Ellen works in a suburban high school with a student population of eight hundred. She has spent her entire career in this district and was one of the first women to assume a high school principalship in Massachusetts. John worked in a large urban high school with over two thousand students, and has since left to become an elementary school principal in the same district. During his career, which was spent in this city, he has also worked as a teacher, counselor, and assistant principal. Allen works in a small rural high school. He has been in his present position for five years, and had previously worked as an assistant principal and teacher in another school district in Massachusetts.

In spite of the differences in their administrative experiences, or in the size, location, and other demographics surrounding their schools, all these administrators shared four major concerns surrounding teacher evaluation: time constraints, evaluation training, evaluation evolution, and their ideal model of evaluation. In presenting their perspectives, the researcher believes their stories will provide a greater understanding of the nature and scope of a secondary principal's involvement with teacher evaluations in the context of their job.

Time Constraints

The conflict in trying to perform all expected tasks, including teacher evaluations, within the limitations of time is a powerful issue for principals. The implications of these time constraints on principals are documented in the research. Conway and Coleman (1984) contend that principals may experience stress due to the effect of time constraints on their ability to complete job responsibilities (including teacher evaluations), and they recommend that principals employ stress-reduction strategies such as conflict resolution and relaxation techniques. Rallis and Highsmith (1986), in examining the myths and realities of the principal's role, maintain that although the principal is supposed to provide educational leadership, such as performing effective teacher evaluations, management

tasks take most of a principal's time. A study by Giannangelo and Malone (1987) supports the notion that there is a conflict between the principal's expected role as an educational leader (teacher evaluator) and the principal's actual role of spending most of his/her time performing administrative and disciplinary tasks. Three of the principals in this study voiced concerns about how they are forced to deal with the issue of time constraints in performing teacher evaluations.

In order to understand the effect of time constraints on a principal's ability to evaluate teachers, the context in which the evaluation process occurs needs to be explained. Ellen, a principal of a suburban Massachusetts high school, outlined her schedule of activities, which is typical of the other three principals who participated in this study. She talked about how the constraints of time dictate how and what she does during her day, nights and even weekends. While she did not specifically refer to performing teacher evaluations, Ellen did speak about the many responsibilities of the principalship. This excerpt from her interview provides a sense of the importance of time, and thus, helps to frame the excerpts from the other principals:

> It's a very busy job. I get here at around 7 every morning and I leave at 5. I come back at 6:30 and leave at 10 or 11. I'm here on Saturdays,

and some Sundays. I'm at a billion events, chaperon kinds of stuff. For all intents and purposes, I live here, and it's a good thing that I live in town because I wouldn't have the access that I do to the building. I put in a lot of hours because I can't figure out how to get the job done any other way. I get little paperwork done during the day because I'm either meeting with people or I'm out walking around the school, observing classes or attending conferences. I meet with parents, I meet with students, I meet with the faculty and that takes up most of the day time. The paperwork has to get done at night or on the weekends. I usually take stuff and I sort it. I do a lot of sorting and I probably waste more time sorting than I do doing work. It's what absolutely has to get done. I get to that point often. What is somebody going to yell for in the next half hour that I've got to get done, and what can wait until next week? So I have this big pile that says weekend on it and it gets pushed aside so that I can worry about the other stuff.

It is necessary to put stuff aside because I'm just up to here. That's when a lot of time gets put in, and now what I find is that there are a lot of teachers who like to come in on the weekends too.

So I spend part of my Saturday mornings opening the door and letting people in and out so they can come in and work. It's a tiring job, it's an exciting job, it is different. Every day has something different in it, but the paper kills me. Last week I said to my secretary that I can't have any appointment today. Nobody can see me, I'm locking myself in my office, and I did for most of the day. That is a rare thing for me to do, but it had gotten to the point where I absolutely had to get something done and there was no other way to do it. While I was locked up in here, unavailable to people, I had the biggest guilt feelings that I ever could imagine. If I'm not always available to everybody, I just feel really guilty.

Well, today I arrived early in the morning because I had a 7:00 meeting with the Student Government leaders to tell me about Spirit Week. So we met at 7. Then at 7:30 following that meeting I did take an hour to try to get some paperwork out of the way because as you can see, my desk is a mess, and I haven't had a chance to do that. Our health board met later in the morning. The director of student services, the chairperson of the guidance department, our health coordinator, and I along with the superintendent founded this thing

we called the health board because we were starting to duplicate a lot of services. We established it two years ago so that we can coordinate all the programs and services related to health. So we met for about 1½ hours. Then it was time to talk to the vice principal about some issues in the school. I got out and managed to walk around to see how things were going, and checked on what happened at the mediation session the night before. I got over to the lunchroom, said hello to some kids, and talked with the president of the senior class because I'm also one of the class advisors of the freshman class this year because I couldn't find two people who could do it right now and we need to get ready for Spirit Week. At 2:00 I had to be at the superintendent's office because we are now into budget and I was there until 5:00 dealing with the regional budget. Actually not 5, but 4:30 because I ran to the polls to vote and got home at 5. I brought all this work home to do last night because I felt so rotten. So I stayed in and also watched the election returns and then went to bed.

Ellen admits to spending evenings and weekends at her job, and although she doesn't seem to object to the heavy workload, she feels guilty when the need to complete some of the paperwork prevented her from interacting with

her students and staff. Periodically, she forces herself to assume a clerical role; however, she clearly prefers to postpone the paper-related tasks as long as possible in order to be around the people in her building. This excerpt, in outlining some of her daily activities, provides the contextual framework for the teacher evaluation process.

Although her day was crammed with a variety of job-related activities, Ellen found time to perform her evaluation responsibilities, and she was the only principal (in this study) who did not specifically mention a negative impact of time on the teacher evaluation process. Carl, a secondary administrator from a suburban Connecticut school district, experienced conflicts in performing teacher evaluations. He saw the constraints of time decreasing his contact with the teachers, and he referred to the struggle between having to deal with unpredictable emergencies and performing classroom observations:

> Well I think you have to attempt to balance time, but you always have to. I'd like to think the staff knows that you have to be prepared for those unexpected things. It may be that a parent comes in, and if you're supposed to go to a third period class, and something major comes up, you have to weigh the situation. If someone walks in off the street, maybe they can see another

administrator, or even wait a while. You hate to do that, but I don't want the teachers to feel like they are in second place, but the time factor has become predictably unpredictable, and that's the hard part. You hate to be so programmed that you say to your secretary that at 9 I do this, and at 10 I do this. I think you have to understand that things come up and could change your plans. I mean last Friday we had this turmoil in our school, there would be no way I could go into a classroom and observe that day. We had to take care of some serious business that day but you can't fall into the trap of trying to do everything.

I think we take that as more of a part of our job and that we can or should deal with everything that comes across our desk right away. I think that sometimes we have to close a few of those windows, not the door, but a few of those windows, and say hey, maybe I'm running around but I've got this observation, and nothing major is going on so I'm going in to do that observation for that teacher. If I don't, I feel that you have let them down because you know that they have prepared for you to come in. They are ready and they want you there.

I think that you have to let them know what occurred if you can't make it so they don't feel this whole thing doesn't mean very much. If you don't let them know what happened, they are going to assume that something else is more important than what I'm doing in my classroom, and damn it, you have got to make them feel that what they are doing is important. I'll even have my secretary call, and then I'll go see them and say this happened, I hope you understand. It's very uncomfortable for me and it's not right to them. It is not fair because if we sit down and say that I'm going to come into your Math class tomorrow and you say fine, and we are going to be working on this or that, and then all of a sudden I don't show up, you are going to say, what did he do to me. But if you call and apologize that there was a fight or something in the cafeteria, then they know.

Having to deal with a crisis instead of performing a promised observation is a source of constant task conflict for Carl. He believes it is important to inform teachers of exactly why he couldn't make an observation so that they don't feel as though they are not important. In fact, Carl is willing to make himself unavailable for routine

management tasks for brief periods in order to make an observation.

Allen, a high school principal from a rural school district in Massachusetts, reinforced the notion of time constraints as he talked about the tasks that confront him on a regular basis:

> The whole question of time as a principal as I'm sure you understand is just an incredible one. I mean you know we are doing everything from trying to make certain there is a master schedule, that all the kids have schedules, and that all the teachers have classrooms and all that kind of stuff to dealing with custodial issues, maintenance issues, we are knee-deep in renovating portions of the building, taking time to talk with architects and consultants and the whole thing. The job description of the principal is just all encompassing and so I came into the position with a real sort of plan for time management and I desperately try to spend the four periods in the morning before lunch at staying out in the classrooms or halls and not in my office. I would say that I'm about 75 percent successful at that. I end up in the cafeteria for an hour and a half during lunch and then I usually try to get out to make certain that everything is all

settled in after lunch and then I'm basically in the office doing paperwork, returning phone calls, getting set for meetings that occur after school and I usually try and get out at dismissal time and be outside as people leave. So that gives me four hours in the morning to be out in the classrooms and I try to start out in September and start the evaluation process and go through it because I figure if I can't get it done by mid-January when our exams start, forget it. We get into all the budget crisis and what not in February and I just don't have any time at that point. I still feel that I don't have the time even with that kind of framework of what my goals are.

I'm not spending as much time as I would like. I'd like to spend twice the time I actually get to spend. I prioritize that I have that big block of time in the morning when I'm out in the building. The problem is when a crisis comes up and you know the superintendent calls and she needs something on her time frame and you have got to react to those things, unfortunately, this is a district without an assistant superintendent, so she relies on the principals to do a lot of special projects and to consult with her and give her feedback and stuff

like that. So that's a real big interrupter into whatever I would establish as a priority. To give you an example, I'm trying to interview for a science position and I get a memo from the superintendent on the day I've already got four interviews lined-up that we are going to have a big curriculum meeting, so I have to go and rearrange my schedule in order to fit hers. I understand that those things happen, but it creates problems for the jobs I've got to do.

What I try to do in managing my time when I evaluate is to take a broad look at people, and what I perceive to be weak areas. I'll involve the department heads to talk with them and get their feedback. If we concur on the problem then I help them devise a plan, but they actually monitor the plan because I don't have time. I've got forty-seven people to go out and look at, and that's classroom folk. Then I've got guidance counselors, psychologists, and social workers that we have to do in a different way. So I'm in a hurry. I've got to see each one of them and it's realistically going to take me three months. When you talk about seeing them, each one of them, and then you've got to write stuff on them, now we're

talking about a half year. Then you've got to sit down and talk to them.

Time is a real issue with me and I guess my feeling is as I'm going in and I'm sort of taking a quick look at people, making some snap judgment and I'm not only using that forty-five minute period, I'm using other information as well. Obviously if I have five parents calling me to complain about a teacher, those complaints are buzzing around my head. If my vice principal is also telling me that this teacher sends lots of kids out, then sure, those things are things I'm thinking about and I'm forming judgment. Because of time constraints I probably use a lot of information that I might not use if I got to see them more, but I end up using all the stuff I hear. It's time constraints wrapped up with what I perceive as the responsibility of the position which is where the buck stops in terms of what is going on in the building.

Allen talked about the variety of responsibilities that he deals with regularly. Although he plans to spend time each day observing his professional staff, other priorities intrude into his schedule and force him to rearrange his activities. For example, he spoke about how the superintendent inadvertently created problems in his

schedule by requesting his presence at a meeting. He also talked about the pressure of evaluating a large number of staff and cutting corners in order to complete those evaluations.

Having a large number of teachers to evaluate in a prescribed period of time is also a problem for other principals. John, who was high school principal of a large urban school in Massachusetts, talked about the monumental task of evaluating all his teachers in a very short period of time. He also alluded to cutting corners in order to accomplish that required task:

> Last year at the high school I had to evaluate 78 teachers. I was given this assignment after the previous principal had done nothing about evaluations from September to January. When he left in January, I was told on February 1 that there were 78 teachers due for evaluation and the deadline was the end of March (laughter). What can I say? You don't have to close your eyes to see what kind of monumental task that was in terms of blocking out those hours for me and my assistants to just make the observations. That didn't include all the conferences. So each teacher really required as much as 4 hours of time for the evaluation that was required that year. What can I say? It got done. The ones

that did the job, you went along and gave them what you felt they deserved. On the newer ones you spent a little more time and tried to be a bit more helpful in the sense of offering some suggestions. Even though it's going to be more time-consuming, you make time for what is important.

In terms of priorities you know, we have got contractual obligations to evaluate half your staff every other year. I think that for nothing else, more time can be spent seeing and cutting through the dog and pony shows, and to really get down to basic issues about what is going on in that classroom. By that I mean if we can split the number of observations from two half hour segments to four 15-minute segments we are going to get much more of an opportunity to see what is really going on in the various subjects that you are observing. Now you can prioritize. I'm not saying we are going to be in classrooms for 5 or 6 hours, that's not going to happen, due to the time constraints on everybody.

John's story further illuminates the problem that principals have in trying to complete the very complex and time-consuming task of teacher evaluations. He acknowledged that not all the teachers received the necessary attention

during the evaluation cycle. He also spoke about contractual constraints forced on him by the teacher's contract. Negotiated agreements also impact the way principals conduct the teacher evaluation process. Feelings of guilt at not making an observation, intrusions from superintendents, large numbers of teachers to be evaluated, and contractual obligations are some of the issues that contribute to the constraints of time as principals try to perform teacher evaluations.

Evaluation Training

As the principals described their involvement in the teacher evaluation process, the issue of training to perform this task was raised. Johnson and Snyder (1986) wrote that principals perceive their training to evaluate teachers is weak and in need of improvement. Mock and Melnick (1991) performed a study that showed that administrative certification programs may not provide adequate training in appropriate methods of evaluation. This research supports the views of the principals in their study who viewed training as an important part of successful teacher evaluations.

Carl spoke about his lack of training in evaluating teachers, and how he acquired evaluating skills on the job:

> I don't think that there was a real preparation that one received in college. You took courses and so on, but you actually get out

in the firing line when you have to go out into the classroom. Those first few experiences were very interesting. I think you try not to be tentative. I think the people where I was knew me and that probably made it easier because I could choose to go into some classrooms that I knew would be run well and would lead itself into a discussion afterwards that was smooth. There wouldn't be anything bad, or there wouldn't be any major conflict or a major problem that you would have to discuss. I think as you got out and did a few of those you started to just spread out to more of the teachers a bit more. I guess I was fortunate in that sense being in a school where you knew the people.

Carl's story illuminates the circumstances surrounding administrators who are expected to perform tasks for which they are not adequately trained. While he gradually acclimated himself to the evaluation process, there are no guarantees that his increased comfort with performing evaluations necessarily meant that he was doing a good job. In fact, Carl could have evaluation deficiencies that would become a fixture in his style over time.

Allen did receive training in a particular evaluation method, but he acknowledged that this training was by chance, not by design:

Well in graduate school just sort of by chance, I happened to take a course on evaluation, and unbeknownst to me, the individual that was teaching the course had a real preference and that preference was toward clinical supervision. It was basically a model of helping people reflect upon their practice and getting them to be more observant as to what was actually going on in the classroom. So I got involved with that course, took some additional class work, did some independent studies in that, and actually went out into the field. I was supervising students in Massachusetts using that model extensively and went back to my own district and stayed involved with that peer type of thing. The training I received was helpful to me and the people I worked with. It's sort of like curriculum. I think that we probably all talk using different vocabulary and probably don't understand a common vocabulary around evaluation. Just like we don't understand a common vocabulary around curriculum. So I think it would be real valuable to the district to have both teachers and administrators, administrators at all levels trained in a common vocabulary, and a common process derived from the research.

Although it happened by chance, Allen did receive some training in evaluating teachers. Because, however, principals must use the evaluation format of their district, there is no guarantee that an administrator's training will include the specific model his/her district is using. In spite of that issue, Allen did acquire some evaluating skills. He also raised the issue of common language in the evaluation process, which can affect a principal's ability to communicate with teachers. Saphier and Gower (1987) recommend that both teachers and administrators be trained in the evaluation format so that they can communicate with each other.

John, who was the urban principal, is involved with an evaluation format that requires training administrators and teachers. This training was not part of his administrative preparation, but rather part of his district's initiative to introduce a new evaluation format:

> I had no specific training in evaluation, no specific courses in college in terms of how it is used or what to do. . .At my job I had to go into classes that ranged from Special Ed. to Phys. Ed. to AP. Chemistry and Probability Mathematics. . . Unfortunately for those of us who had been on the job as administrators for 15 years or so, we had not had any upgrading. We had not done any graduate work or any workshops within the system.

We just didn't have the expertise that was needed to effectively evaluate teachers. . .It was a sham (having to evaluate 78 teachers in two months). I don't how else to describe it. The teachers didn't benefit because there was nothing that was given to them in terms of strengths or weaknesses. . .

There is a tremendous amount of misspent time and anybody who thinks they've got the last word in teaching skills, they don't. There is nobody in this profession that should feel they can't learn something relative to how they can present material and get greater achievement out of kids. I think there is this preconception that we as educators are born with the skill to teach or administrate, and this wasn't something that could be enhanced at graduate school. I was in this profession for over 15 years before the system made all the administrators take the Research for Better Teaching course from Robert Saphier. We are now in a 36 hour course. All the administrators in the system are in this.

This is the first time in history that anybody is doing anything for us. Teachers are taking it as part of their professional development. This is how we will begin to use the research that was done

here from the Skillful Teacher to try and effectively change the way teachers operate. . .I think things may change. You know, I think we are moving more to the idea of what we talked about last time in a sense that Saphier has identified it in terms of a valuable knowledge that is basic techniques and basic methods by which a teacher can conduct a lesson to try and identify and meet the various learning styles. I think we are working in that direction slowly, but at least we are pointed that way. We currently have a joint management committee that is studying this new instrument for teacher evaluation. That's where we are at. We are beginning it. The teachers and administrators haven't had much training in it but we are on our way. It's a slow process, but I'm optimistic. I think the reason is when you have been down so long this new stuff looks up to me. You know what I mean? Anything has got to be better than what we have got. I think the training that the teachers and administrators are getting has got to make you a little optimistic. If you have nothing, anything looks good.

John admitted to a lack of preparation for evaluating teachers both and acknowledged the resulting frustrations in trying to perform evaluations without proper training.

After many years, however, John's district is finally moving towards an evaluation format that provides training for all the players in the teacher evaluation arena. Although he is not very far along in the process, he has already experienced sufficient improvements with the new model to make him optimistic about the future.

Another principal, Ellen, has several years of experience with the Saphier and Gower evaluation format. She has worked with this system, which not only places a premium on training both teachers and principals, but also requires that the observation report contain only substantiated claims. She made these comments about teacher evaluations performed with the Saphier and Gower method:

> We are expected to be able to comment on what goes on in the classroom, what the teacher does, and whatever we write has to be filled with claims and evidence, and judgments. So if we say the teacher is really great, we can't leave that on a piece of paper, but we can say because and why. All of us who are evaluating were required to take a course that was given by John Saphier from the Institute of Better Teaching. Our teachers are all required in their second year to take a course called Understanding Teaching (from the same trainers) and that course helps them understand the language we use in our evaluation system. We

> have a common language, we have a common standard, so you can understand what we are after. In a nutshell, that's really what it is all about.

Ellen's brief description of her school's evaluation process raises the important issue of training. As a result of this training, a common evaluation language for teachers and principals is used and a specific format is followed. The knowledge of terminology facilitates greater understanding of the evaluation process by all parties. Additionally, the more objective evaluation format, which requires an evaluator to substantiate her/his claims with actual evidence, increases the integrity and accuracy of teacher evaluation, and correspondingly, the comfort of both teachers and principals.

In the next section, principals talk about how teacher evaluation formats have changed or evolved in their districts.

Evaluation Evolution

Each principal is presently experiencing, or has recently experienced, a change in the teacher evaluation format in their district. McGreal (1983) reported that checklists have been the dominant evaluation format in American public education, and interestingly, all four principals reported using the checklist format at various times in their districts. All these principals have moved away from the checklist style of evaluation to other

formats. Some of them noted that the evaluation formats which replaced the checklists are themselves ready to be replaced again. Carl talked about the evaluation format changes in his district:

> This process (new evaluation format) started off six, seven years ago, and it seemed to work but I think it needs to be revamped or it may have to be refined. I think it has to happen here. We are finding in the three-year cycle (three years of being evaluated by your principal, and then one year of self evaluation) for veteran teachers, you have this appraisal year which is very intense, and a fourth year which is less intense, the professional development year. Then you go right back to appraisal. I think that can be a little too much. You don't need for the top-notch teacher to go right back to appraisal as much. What we are thinking of now is to spread it out a little, and maybe say we will double the years and those teachers will stay where they are (professional development stage) or you go to the appraisal stage for one year and spend three years on the professional development stage. We know teachers can not change radically, so these stages become a problem. There are so many things a teacher can do in the professional development

stage, but because of the one year cycle restraint, you don't have enough time to complete some of those things. We are getting to that.

In fact, it is becoming an administrative time problem also, especially in the elementary level where these people (principals) are all alone. They can have hundreds of special education meetings a year, and then if you take the evaluation process and add three more meetings per teacher or more, they're going to go crazy. It's good (appraisal and professional development cycle) and I think it has given people a shot in the arm and it's given the administration some direction too, yet it doesn't mean it can't be improved upon and that's what we're looking into.

From Carl's perspective, time is the impetus for change in the evaluation format. He doesn't believe that teachers have enough time in the one-year professional development stage to adequately complete goals they may have started. He also feels that principals are becoming overburdened because the format now requires that three of the four years in the evaluation cycle consist of intense observations and evaluation write-ups.

Allen described the circumstances of evaluation format changes in his district this way:

I could certainly think of some districts in Massachusetts where I feel confident that there is a meaningful evaluation going on, but that's only a few, that's only a handful. So I really think that has been a weakness of our system and the perspective that I bring to it is that we have to do a much more serious job of it. You know, when I came to this school, in fact the evaluation procedure in this place would not even meet minimal state standards per Chapter 188 (School Improvement Law of 1985). It took us three years, which is god-awful time, to get rid of that document, and get a new document that we are just implementing this fall (1992) because of the negotiation process we had to go through, and quite frankly, the teachers were not vested. We put out a call initially for teachers to come up and join us on a committee and put something together. The hands didn't go flying up. They didn't want to do it. They were content with what they had because it was inadequate. It didn't place any emphasis to do it seriously and there were enough roadblocks or safeguards in there that they could know that they never could be held accountable. So there was no impetus to change the old system.

We have now changed it, but it took us three years to change it. The teachers that finally joined the process and that worked with us were real reasonable people and shared similar goals with the administrators in terms of what we wanted from the document. I think there were probably other members of the teacher's association that don't share that view, and were very skeptical. I think the thing that stands out for me is the comments that we heard from the association, from those people who showed up and spoke out concerning the document at the ratification meeting. There were tons and tons of paranoia, skepticism and people really fearful of having people look at their practice.

Allen's story of evaluation change in his district was highlighted by what he described as teacher fear about the change in evaluation format. The old format had been used for many years, and many teachers experienced a comfort zone (Ashbough & Kaster, 1988) with the process. A new evaluation format can heighten the anxiety of teachers because they're not sure of what to expect. A conversation one year later (summer of 1993) with Allen indicated that he believed most teachers were more comfortable with the new format after having gone through an evaluation cycle.

John, who had experienced many years of poor or non-existent evaluations, was optimistic about the new evaluation format being implemented in his district. He believes the new system will be able to help teachers improve their teaching because of its more specific focus on identifying teaching behaviors and their effect on the students. This is how he explained the change of evaluation formats in his district:

> Teachers evaluations, I think for most of us in the city, is an emerging area. In the past it was very much a perfunctory task used only to weed out the non-tenured incompetent and even then, used sparingly. It was never used in any sense to improve teaching. It was never used in any sense of having a teacher focus on learning and the various criteria of learning. It was basically a dog and pony show where you went in for a fifteen-minute to thirty-minute lesson. They played every trick that they could find to get the kids going. They put a lot of audio-visual stuff together. They passed out a lot of stuff and therefore, you were supposed to be impressed.
>
> Now with the new system, we are starting to work where we try and isolate and identify various techniques for teachers to help them construct lessons and judge their value as they are teaching

them. You know, we are moving more to an idea of what we talked about last time in the sense of what Saphier has identified in terms of a valuable knowledge. That includes basic techniques and basic methods by which a teacher can conduct a lesson. Not right or wrong, but by using a wide variety of techniques and a wide variety of styles within a lesson to try to identify and try to meet the various learning styles of the students.

I think we are working in that direction slowly, but at least we are pointed that way. We currently have in the city a joint management subcommittee that is studying this new instrument for teacher evaluations. That's where we are at. We are beginning it. The teachers and administrators haven't had much training in it, but we are on our way. It's a slow process.

John described the slow but gradual change to a research based format (Saphier & Gower, 1987) which he hopes will foster actual growth in teaching skills. The new model of teacher evaluation is a dramatic change for both teachers and principals, but John believes that the benefits derived from this process will justify the effort.

This method, The Skillful Teacher, developed by Robert Gower and Jon Saphier, was implemented in Ellen's school district in Massachusetts. She and her teachers have worked

with this format for several years, and are more experienced in its use than the educators in John's district. Interestingly, they now find themselves searching for some supplemental activities to incorporate into their existing format. Ellen said:

> We had the checklist a long time ago and we've moved on. The underlying assumption is that no one has reached a point of perfection. So even the best among us can get better. We expect that everybody will try to get even better than they are each year, so that every evaluation should recommend something to improve upon. That doesn't mean that you are poor in that area or that you have a weakness, or something to be ashamed of, but it is something that you can grow with. We felt that the narrative would really say more to the teachers and enable us to distinguish more clearly among our staff and help us determine what kind of things we need to provide the teachers to help them grow.

The system (Saphier & Gower, 1987) itself, however, we are now looking to change because for some people we feel it has done as much as it is going to do. In some cases the evaluation from one year to the next looks the same, and there is little different that people can think to write.

So we decided that we would try this alternate year thing. I had read some stuff from the Toronto School System, or Ontario system, that they were doing some interesting stuff. So we got a committee together, the teachers and the administrators, to look at this whole thing and agreed with the teacher's association that we would do a three-year pilot of an alternative evaluation system.

You know the State says you have to be evaluated at least every other year. So we decided if we have an off year, wouldn't it be nice if we could say to a teacher, you have done a really outstanding job, we know you are competent, that you are working well, why don't you figure out what you would like to do for a year. Something that is personally rewarding to you and enable you to grow professionally and also take some risks and maybe fail but learn something from it but not have to feel that somebody is standing over your shoulder and going to evaluate you and say ha ha, this person finally had a failure. We were hoping that some people would really take some big risks, maybe not finish the goal, maybe find out that what they wanted to do wasn't such a good idea after all or maybe find

out that the way they were approaching something needed to be changed and they would feel the freedom to do that. In some cases that has happened, and in other cases it hasn't.

Ellen and others in her district are willing to look beyond the limitations of their present format. After working with this system for several years and discovering that it does not continue to meet everyone's needs, they are exploring other teacher evaluation alternatives.

Ideal Evaluations

While telling their stories, several principals described in detail their ideal teacher evaluation format. Some of these descriptions mirrored their present format in their district. In other cases, the principals' ideal model did not resemble their present evaluation formats. Allen described an ideal format that was rooted in an earlier experience with clinical supervision:

> I really believe that evaluations should be connected to growth issues and we ought to be doing all we can to help. I mean in this district where we spend ten million dollars, eight million is going to salaries. That's a big investment and we ought to be doing a lot to develop and nurture that investment. In a building this size with over forty teachers, we ought to have three or

four people who do nothing but get involved in clinical type supervision.

There is no evaluation attached, but it's people going in and helping teachers develop their ability to reflect on their practice and help them grow in that way. My strong advice is that teachers will not grow unless they are able to reflect on their practice and I think it is real hard for a lot of people to develop that ability to really look without excessive emotion on their teaching practices.

I would also like to have on top of that a strong evaluation component in which people who cannot cut it, are released or counseled out in times of budgetary restraints. I wish it would never happen, but it's a reality, so let's face it. We should remove people based on merit as opposed to strictly seniority. However, my first thought is to have a humane system to help people develop and grow. What is compelling about clinical supervision is that you (observer) become an extra set of eyes, because in teaching a lesson, the teacher is intent on getting the message across, and they are going along thinking about that. They may not notice John sitting in the corner writing a suicide note, or that one student is

struggling with a concept as five others are really excited and charged-up, or that Suzy is sitting there with a dazed look on her face. You can miss that stuff.

I think the value of having a clinical supervision model is that you have somebody in there who is trained to look and report on what is going on without having to be bothered with that evaluation stuff. Then you sit down with the individual and regurgitate what you saw. You don't say you were doing a shitty job with so and so, or why the devil do you keep your blinds at half mast when everyone knows the research says they should be at three-quarter mast. You say you saw Suzy roll her eyes when you started talking about Civil Rights and the Constitution. Now you've given the teacher an opportunity to make something of that, to reflect on that. They are at that point they can strategize as to what other alternatives exist. What does there need to be more of or what does there need to be less of? That's what growth is.

Allen's ideal model is based on work he did with clinical supervision. The issue of helping teachers grow is very important to Allen. He has not, however, lost sight of those teachers who cannot or will not improve, and noted that his ideal evaluation needs to contain an accountability

component. He also mentioned the issue of protecting and nurturing the school district's investment in its teaching staff. John would like to work with a model that focuses on goals-setting. This format would require teachers to construct goals for that year and meet with the principal before the evaluation cycle begins to discuss those goals. Under this plan principals would have unrestricted observations to see if goals are being met:

> My ideal evaluation would be to set goals prior to the year starting, that is, teacher-directed goals. What are the things they would like to improve or the things they would like to work on? You do that for each person that you are going to evaluate before September starts. You then have a pre-season meeting to discuss the teacher-directed goals and maybe some suggestions from the principal. After that has been done, I think we should have carte blanche for going into classes. Whether it be 5 minutes, 10 minutes, or an hour, there should be no time constraints. Also there shouldn't be any notification that I'm coming in for my observations. Then I think there would be better opportunities for me going in as an administrator to see what is actually going on rather than just seeing the dog and pony show. Then have two

formal meetings with the teacher to discuss what we observed in the first marking period and another at the end of the semester. I think there would be a larger opportunity for growth relative to what the teacher wanted to do, and also better opportunities for me going in as an administrator, so that I don't see the shows by teachers that I used to see when I had to tell them that I would be in at exactly nine in the morning. I think this would increase the chances that teachers would understand they don't have to put on the dog and pony show, but that we're interested in evaluating all aspects of how that person reacts and interacts with their class. I see the best kinds of teaching in student-centered classes. If we're ever going to get to the point of evaluating that kind of stuff, we have to have more confidence that the teacher will not see us as a threat.

John believes that a goals-focused approach might permit teachers to conduct their lessons with more ownership. He also wants to observe classrooms without announcing his arrival to the teacher, so as to provide him with a more honest view of the teacher's lesson. His desire for unrestricted observations seems to be the result of his negative experiences with his previous evaluation format.

Ellen doesn't seem as pre-occupied with the failures of past formats, but is excited about exploring new ways to conduct evaluation. She described her ideal format as an opportunity for a teacher to take some risks and to be more reflective about his/her teaching:

> I would love to see faculty writing an assessment of their performance for the year on what they have accomplished. How they have done, whatever their goal that they set out to accomplish, so that there is evidence that some reflection has been committed to writing. I think there is a difference between talking about it and actually writing it down. I think it seems a little more real when you write it down. I'd like to see that happen, and I would love to see this alternate year program at a point where teachers would feel comfortable really grabbing hold of some goals that would involve some pretty big risks. Trying a new technique in the classroom, recognizing that the research tells us that whenever you try something new there is going to be a really big dip before you see success. So that you can't try it and have it succeed immediately, and that's scary to somebody that is really doing an outstanding job on plan A, who could do even a better job with plan B, but

has to go through that learning curve. I don't think we are that far away from those things, but it is more a bigger investment on the part of the individuals who are being evaluated. We couldn't go here from the old checklist, we had to go from plan A, to B, to C.

The reason that I think it was necessary was that at least to go from B to C, we couldn't do the narrative kind of stuff that we were doing unless we all understood what we were talking about. So there was a peak of education there, that had to happen for all of us. I was never trained even when I was taking all those administrative courses. You know, you would sit there and decide do they put up nice bulletin boards? Is the room cheery and bright? Does the teacher look like a professional? Is there a lesson plan in the top drawer? All of that is nice, but it is not getting into the essence of what is really going on in the classroom.

When we began to look into the research, the work that Saphier has done, there were all these elements that really made for effective teaching. That was really important, that piece was critical. I think we needed to go through the, OK, yeah I can tell you what I see and talk to you about

that, before we could get to a point where somebody could say, well I really understand what this is all about, and I did experiment with some new attention moves this year and it really worked. I worked with Sally down the hall and we did this thing together and I learned from her. I think I have really grown here. That felt good to me. This is the kind of thing I'd like to see, but we still need the exterior evaluation. I still think that it is necessary to be able to validate what's happening. I don't see evaluations turning into a year's worth of contemplations and telling the Superintendent that we're doing a good job. That's not evaluation. There still needs to be dialogue.

Of those principals who described their ideal teacher evaluation model, Ellen's ideal came closest to the actual model she uses. While she believes that their existing narrative format is necessary to validate teaching skills, she sees room to expand teacher evaluation to include a reflective component. She also details, from her experiences, the need for evaluation formats to evolve from the checklist style to the narrative, and then to the reflective format.

In describing their perspectives on teacher evaluations, the issues of time constraints, evaluation

training, evaluation evolution, and ideal models were important factors for the principals in this study. These four themes frame the way in which these principals conduct evaluation in their schools. The next section will examine the implications of the data, and place the perspectives of teachers and principals in a contextual framework that provides balance to their points of view. This last section will also make recommendations based on the data.

C H A P T E R VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The evaluation of teachers is a process that has taken place since the teacher and student relationship has existed. During ancient times, a person's ability to earn a living as a teacher was based upon pleasing his/her employer (Miller, 1987). Customer satisfaction usually translated into continued employment. Teacher evaluations have evolved from these ancient, economically based formats to various styles that purport to examine teaching skills.

The literature indicates that school systems today evaluate their teachers for two major reasons, formative and summative. The formative purpose of evaluation is improvement of instructional quality (Miller, 1987). Dressel (1978) indicated that such evaluation should be designed to "improve the quality of learning and increase the percentage of students who attain the important and agreed-upon goals of learning" (p. 338). Although worded differently by educators, this notion of improving some aspect of teaching or learning by helping teachers is an important purpose of the evaluation process. The summative purpose of teacher evaluation is for making administrative decisions on promotions, salaries, or tenure (Gage, 1959; Harris, 1986).

The most publicized aspect of the dilemma that both summative and formative functions often reside in one administrator focuses on the potential conflicts between the notion of instructional improvement and the need to make administrative decisions. Trying to resolve these conflicts has not necessarily improved teaching. The process of evaluating teachers could be improved if we had more knowledge about how both teachers and principals are affected by evaluation, and then used that knowledge to construct appropriate evaluation formats. It is within the boundaries of the struggle between the requirements of the organization and the needs of the individual that I studied what it is like for teachers and principals to participate in the teacher evaluation process.

In this study I asked secondary teachers and principals to describe in their words their experiences in the teacher evaluation process. I probed the perspectives of these two groups of educators because they are most directly affected by the evaluation process. The information collected by in-depth interviewing provided a deeper understanding of how teacher evaluations influence teachers and principals. The increased awareness that resulted also has the potential to improve the quality of the evaluation process for teachers and principals.

Most previous studies on teacher evaluation have focused solely on the teachers. While teachers'

perspectives are important to the success of teacher evaluations, the viewpoints of the administrators who are obligated to perform teacher evaluations are also vital. These individuals, who are mostly principals, frequently must perform evaluations using a format and a process not of their choosing. In addition administrators must balance the time required to evaluate teachers with the time needed to perform a wide variety of other tasks. As with those of the teachers they are evaluating, the perspectives of principals are critical to the success of teacher evaluations; consequently, the important issues and concerns they raise also need to be considered.

The ability to gather information to provide new insights into the evaluation process depends upon the methodology used and the skills of the researcher. Because methods such as questionnaires and structured interviews usually are dominated by the researcher's perspectives, they might not uncover the widest range of an individual's true feelings about the topic. A methodology that permits the participants' perspectives to dominate could reasonably generate new information about how teachers and principals feel about the evaluation process. In order to maximize the participants' freedom to express their views in their own words, I employed in-depth phenomenological interviewing because it allowed participants to tell their own stories of teacher evaluations within the context of their own lives.

This in-depth interviewing style is characterized by open-ended questions, which allow the participants to reconstruct significant events in their lives (Seidman, 1991). The framework of the interviewing process consisted of a series of three ninety-minute interviews (Seidman, Sullivan, & Schatzkamer, 1983). This format allowed the participants to build upon previously collected information as they told their own story in their own words. The first interview asked the participant to explain how she became a teacher and what it is like to be a teacher. The second interview asked the participant to describe what it is like to participate in the teacher evaluation process. The third interview asked the participant to reflect on the meaning of the teacher evaluation process within the context constructed during the previous two interviews.

I interviewed teachers and principals from four different school systems in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Preference for locally gathered data was based not only on time and money constraints; I was very interested in having my teaching staff reap any potential benefits from this work. Teachers may find locally generated data more compelling, and thus may be more willing to consider any changes based upon research results. The four locations included schools in rural, urban and suburban areas. They also included two school systems that purport to be on the cutting edge of evaluation methodology. One of those school

systems, which is located in Massachusetts, uses the evaluation format derived from John Saphier and Robert Gower's work, The Skillful Teacher. The other progressive school system is located in a Connecticut district that has devoted much time and money to developing evaluation formats which more closely reflect current research. The evaluation formats in the Connecticut district also reflect the increased emphasis on connecting teacher evaluations to teacher and staff development.

The researcher interviewed four teachers and the principal (or assistant principal) at one secondary school in three of those four locations. In the fourth location, the suburban district in Massachusetts using the Saphier teacher evaluation format, contract negotiation issues influenced the principal to limit the researcher's access to her teachers. Thus, for the fourth system, the researcher gained entrance to another suburban district in Massachusetts that used the Saphier evaluation format. In trying to gain access to teachers, I could not control who wanted to participate in the study. Ideally, I would have liked to interview women and men who are tenured and non-tenured teachers. I suspected that gender and job security were two issues that could influence teachers' and principals' perspectives on the evaluation process. In reality, of the four principals, one was a woman, and all were veteran administrators. Of the sixteen teachers

interviewed, nine were women, and all but three of the participants were tenured.

The interviews began in July of 1992 and concluded in May of 1993. The series of three interviews of each participant yielded approximately 60 to 100 double-spaced pages of data, and I reviewed the material only after all three interviews were completed. I read the data several times before actually culling out the most interesting and compelling stories from each of the participants. This material was marked, labeled, and collated by the similarities or themes contained in the passages. As I worked to condense the data, which contained the stories of my participants, I took care not to destroy the contextual nature of that material. I presented the teachers' perspectives using a combination of emerging themes combined with an introductory profile, and because of the smaller number of participants, I presented the principals' perspectives using just the themes.

Teachers' Themes

The themes generated from the teachers' perspectives on evaluation included the need for feedback and positive reinforcement. Teachers wanted the evaluation process to foster professional growth, and they wanted evaluators who had earned their respect and who had professional credibility. Included in these perspectives were experiences which fostered negative reflections that

centered on careless, weak, manipulative, or perfunctory evaluations.

Feedback

Teachers in this study reported a need to receive feedback from their principals. The intensity or quantity of that need for feedback varied among the teachers. Some teachers, who rarely interacted with their principals, expressed satisfaction with hearing only a few words dealing with a classroom observation. Other teachers, who regularly experienced some feedback, desired more in-depth interactions. The teachers in this study appeared to have established their own personal levels for feedback based upon prior experience and comfort. Thus, it seems important for principals to uncover the individual needs of their teachers for feedback in order to provide the necessary levels of feedback.

Positive Reinforcement

Every teacher interviewed expressed the desire to receive positive reinforcement from their principal in their evaluation. For some, these comments provided validation of their teaching efforts, while for others it simply meant their principal paid attention to the lesson she/he observed. As with feedback, the need in this area also varied, and correspondingly, it is important for principals to supply enough positive reinforcement to motivate teachers. Further, teachers also reported negative

reactions to evaluations which were overly complimentary. From their perceptions, these teachers seemed to possess an accurate sense of the quality of their lesson and expected the principals' comments to reflect those feelings.

Professional Growth

The teachers I interviewed subscribed to the notion of using the teacher evaluation process to foster professional growth. They all expected, and some even demanded, that their evaluations should help make them better teachers. Unfortunately, many reported that the evaluation process did not succeed at improving their teaching skills. Some of the reasons teachers offered for this lack of success include insufficient or useless feedback, unduly laudatory evaluation comments, and poorly trained or prepared principals.

The teachers expressed disappointment in the failure of the evaluation process to deliver on its promise of fostering professional growth. In this respect, the teachers' higher level of expectations didn't match their actual experiences; as school districts adopt different evaluation formats, however, teachers remain optimistic that a new system of teacher evaluation will be successful at providing professional growth.

Respect for the Evaluator

Teachers reported that their evaluations were more effective and worthwhile if they respected their principal.

From the teachers' perspectives, principals earned respect by showing honesty and competence in the performance of all aspects of their job, including the evaluation of teachers. This means that principals can use the respect gained in other parts of their job to be more effective evaluators. It also means that principals may lose effectiveness as teacher evaluators if they have not earned the respect of their teachers in the execution of their responsibilities in other areas.

Credibility of the Evaluator

Teachers reported that their evaluations were more believable if they perceived their principal was a credible evaluator. For some teachers credibility meant that their principals' area of academic preparation matched theirs. For most teachers, however, credibility meant that the principals' feedback fell within their range of acceptance. This usually meant that the principal should arrive for the teacher observation properly trained and prepared, remain for a sufficient amount of time to accurately record what went on in the classroom, and finally provide the teacher with a balanced report including positive feedback and realistic suggestions for improvement.

Negative Reflections

While all the teachers interviewed expressed positive overall attitudes towards the potential for success with the teacher evaluation process, their stories reflected some

negative experiences with evaluations. All the teachers shared occurrences illustrating careless, weak, perfunctory, and even manipulative evaluations at various times in their careers. In my view, the inability of the teacher evaluation process to fulfill its traditionally dual purposes of (1) helping teachers improve or (2) making employment decisions indicates there is something wrong somewhere. The researcher's examination of the principals' themes was intended to shed more light on this point.

Principals' Themes

The perspectives of the principals generated four major themes. Principals spoke about the constraints of time which affected their ability to perform evaluations along with all the other required tasks. They also spoke about the lack of training in the area of teacher evaluation and the impact of that deficiency. A third theme was the evolution of the teacher evaluation process they experienced in their school district. The fourth theme generated from the principals' stories was their vision of ideal models of teacher evaluations which they would like to see implemented.

Time Constraints

The stories told by principals suggest these individuals have incredibly busy schedules. They usually arrive at work early and very often work both nights and weekends. They meet with students, parents, teachers,

custodians, cooks, superintendents, business people, and whoever else may connect with the school. They are responsible for the evaluation and professional development of all the personnel connected with the school's operation, teacher and student schedules, the school's budget, the maintenance of the building and grounds, the curricular and extra-curricular offerings, and everything else connected with the school. In spite of those responsibilities, teachers should be evaluated to monitor the quality of instruction in the school.

The principals' stories also illustrate the resulting problems which occur when the issue of competing tasks collides with the issue of insufficient time. The principals reported cutting corners and prioritizing job-related responsibilities. They also spoke of their frustrations with an ever-increasing work load which places even greater demands on their time.

Lack of Training

It is important to note that all of the principals reported that initially they received no special training to perform evaluations with their district's evaluation format. While some exposure to principles of teacher evaluation is part of the certification process in most states (Castetter, 1986), specific and thorough training in the actual format of the school district was missing for the principals in this study. Although evaluation training has now been

provided in those two school districts that have adopted the Saphier evaluation model, a void in the principals' preparation to perform evaluations existed for many years.

In my view, this lack of training raises two related issues which are problems within the field of education, and are substantiated by the interviews with the principals. The first problem is that superintendents apparently assume that a state certified principal is a competent evaluator. The second problem is that superintendents do not usually devote time and effort to training the new principals they hire in the specific evaluation format of the school district. With all the tasks principals are now expected to perform, it's unreasonable to expect that principals will be experts in all areas. If superintendents are serious about principals performing quality teacher evaluations in their district, they should identify principals' skill levels upon hiring them and provide the necessary inservice principal development training to fill any gaps that may exist.

Evaluation Evolution

All of the principals reported working with the check list style of teacher evaluation at some point in their career, and they also indicated that they are now using another format which appears to be better and offers hope for improving the teacher evaluation process in their district. I'm impressed with the sense of optimism these principals expressed with the evolution of evaluation

formats in light of the past failures they experienced with traditional evaluation formats. The apparent lack of satisfaction and success with the older evaluation models has fostered this willingness to try something new and different.

For some, this represents the first change to a different teacher evaluation format they ever experienced, while for others, the recent changes are part of a series of differing evaluation formats they have experienced. The two suburban school districts, the one in Connecticut and one in Massachusetts, are further along in the evolution of their teacher evaluation formats than the urban and rural districts in Massachusetts. Not surprisingly, the two suburban districts also spend more money per pupil (over fifty-five hundred dollars per student per year) than the urban and rural districts (under thirty-nine hundred dollars per student per year).

Ideal Model

Three of the four principals spoke about a vision of an ideal teacher evaluation model they would like to use. The components of their ideal evaluation models consisted of a variety of teacher evaluation strategies. Allen was convinced that clinical supervision techniques would provide the greatest benefits to teachers. John wanted to work with a goal-focused model which placed responsibility on teachers and principals jointly to set those goals. Ellen wanted to

work with an evaluation format that allows teachers to reflect on their work in order to improve. In spite of those wants, all those principals use district approved models which differed from their ideal formats.

From the interviews I could not determine if their desire to work with an evaluation model that differed from the approved district format caused significant problems. Although all of the principals seemed reasonably content with their existing evaluation formats, I can't help but wonder if their evaluation preferences influence the way they perform teacher evaluations. For example, does Allen allow his bias towards clinical supervision to affect the way he uses his school district's evaluation format?

Connections to the Theme of Time

In getting to a point of greater understanding of teachers' and principals' perspectives on the issues surrounding teacher evaluation, I examined connections in some of the themes from both teachers and principals. These connections do not necessarily emerge from the data because of the interview format. All participants were interviewed alone during the three sessions, and their stories were told with the singular perspective of each teacher or principal. In isolation, the themes generated by the teachers or principals might offer a biased view about what the teacher evaluation process is like for those educators. In reality, teachers and principals interact during the evaluation

process, and in exploring associations between the themes, a more balanced view of both the teachers' and principals' perspectives can be reached.

Of the four themes generated by the principals' interviews, they indicated that time constraints most directly influenced the quality of teacher evaluations. All four principals talked about the difficulty in performing effective teacher evaluations in light of all of the tasks required in their job. Boyd (1989) reinforces these beliefs about time when he stated that principals do not spend enough time evaluating teachers. The theme of time from the interviews of principals also seem to associate with several of the themes expressed by the teachers and thus provide context for those themes.

From the data, teachers desired feedback about their teaching from their principals. They also wanted to hear positive reinforcement to validate their efforts in the classroom and to provide additional motivation to further improve their teaching skills. Connected to feedback and positive reinforcement is the resulting potential for pedagogical growth. Teachers in this study believed that evaluations can and should provide a stimulus for professional growth, and they expected their principals to help in that process.

The themes raised by teachers in this study suggest that from their experience not enough time was devoted to

the evaluation process. The issues of feedback, positive reinforcement, and growth certainly depend upon the principal dedicating enough time to observe classes adequately, document the observations, and meet with teachers to discuss those observations. The dilemma occurs when the principal must go to the cafeteria to quell a student disturbance, or go to the superintendent's office with a report, or complete a task that has just taken on a higher priority. These were very real intrusions for the principals in this study who, as a result, were forced into performing other tasks at the expense of the teacher evaluation process.

While nearly every teacher interviewed responded to the evaluation process positively, almost all experienced negative occurrences associated with evaluations during their careers. These experiences, which associate with the principals' theme of time, were due to evaluations done carelessly, weakly, or perfunctorily. Teachers reported receiving evaluations from principals who spent little or no time in their classes, or who offered comments of little or no value. They also spoke of principals who missed obvious classroom occurrences, or who rated everything they saw as excellent. Teachers also reported that principals wrote the same evaluations year after year or approached the evaluations process with a great deal of indifference.

Poorly done evaluations could be the result of insufficient time devoted to the evaluation process.

Several principals admitted to lowering the priority of teacher evaluations or rushing through the process because of conflicting demands and the pressure to complete other tasks. The principals also spoke of the unpredictable nature of their jobs as influencing their ability to devote enough time to the evaluation process. They told how the increased responsibilities of the principalship have also expanded the occupational unpredictability that occurs daily. This is reinforced by Gettys and Fowler's study (1989) which reported the heavy weight of responsibilities and the conflicting demands of the job as factors which affected performance.

The organization of most secondary schools puts teachers into classrooms in which they usually don't see their principal very often except for class observations. It's not surprising that most teachers are unaware of how their principals spend their day at school. Accordingly, if teachers felt snubbed during the evaluation process and were not aware of mitigating circumstances surrounding that neglect, they would justifiably fault the principal for those behaviors. The issues surrounding the connections with time indicate that one reason the expectations of teachers are not being met due to the realities of the principals' responsibilities.

Connections to the Theme of Training

The lack of training around the evaluation process is another theme generated from the principals' interviews that connects with several themes from the teachers. Several teachers stated that they assumed their principals knew how to properly evaluate teaching, yet principals spoke about how they never received any training in the area of evaluation before they became principals. The failure of the teachers' expectations to agree with the realities of the principals' occupational preparation results in a failure of the evaluation process to accomplish its mission fully.

The teachers' themes of wanting feedback, reinforcement, and growth to be necessary components of the teacher evaluation process are also dependent upon the principals' knowledge that these are important ingredients in properly administered teacher evaluations. The teacher's concerns surrounding deficient evaluations also associate with the principals' awareness of the importance of performing thoughtful and well-done teacher evaluations. This knowledge or awareness on the part of principals is reinforced with proper training in teacher evaluation formats.

Teachers also spoke about the issues of respect and credibility as being important to their responsiveness to the teacher evaluation process. While some of these

teachers believed that respect was generated from their principal's performance in evaluating teachers, other teachers viewed respect as encompassing all of their principals' responsibilities. Teachers also reported that the believability of the evaluations was enhanced when the evaluator possessed a similar academic background or the feedback fell with their levels of acceptance.

These themes associate with the level of training of the principal. Principals thoroughly trained in the use of the evaluation formats employed in the district are able to construct more believable teacher evaluations, and enjoy more respect from the teachers. Also, if the principals' academic training coincides with the teachers' subject area, the evaluations and the evaluators have even more credibility. All the principals, however, admitted to a lack of training in the field of teacher evaluations, in spite of being state certified. While one principal reported he received training in one evaluation format in a graduate course, it is not the one used in his district. It's also unlikely that a principal's area of academic expertise will match all the areas represented in today's secondary schools. As with the issue of time, the lack of training for principals demonstrates how the teachers' expectations fall short of the realities of their principals' occupational preparation.

Unconnected Theme of Manipulation

The issue of manipulative evaluation practices as a concern expressed by several teachers did not relate to any of the four themes raised by the principals. Although some teachers reported that evaluations could be changed if you complained or that evaluations were orchestrated to be punitive, none of the principals spoke about these behaviors or any other negative evaluation strategies. Within the group of participants, one teacher maintained that her principal evaluated her dishonestly, and yet the interviews with that principal never revealed those manipulative behaviors. I would speculate that principals would not willingly acknowledge their participation in any negative evaluation behaviors like those raised by the teachers. The other possibility is that principals may not view their behaviors as dishonest or manipulative, but instead sees them as accurate and appropriate.

Recommendations

Several recommendations emerge from this study of the perspectives of the teachers and principals. These suggestions are designed to reflect the collective viewpoints of the two groups most closely associated with the evaluation process. At the system level, the district priority of performing teacher evaluations needs to be assessed, and if appropriate, upgraded to meet the needs of teachers and principals. At the building level, other

alterations in traditional approaches to evaluations by teachers and principals can affect improvements regardless of the district's level of priority of teacher evaluations. These changes revolve primarily around communication and respect between and among teachers and principals.

System Level Recommendations

1. School boards and superintendents must determine the level of priority of the teacher evaluation process in comparison to other district-wide tasks.

A study performed by Wise et al. (1984) documented the importance of a top-level commitment to and resources for evaluation. The data from my study not only corroborate Wise's work but document the ramifications of the issue of top-level support for both teachers and principals involved in the teacher evaluation process. Two school districts in my study, the suburban districts in Massachusetts and Connecticut, demonstrate top level support for the teacher evaluation process. In Connecticut, the State Department of Education has mandated specific evaluation parameters which include training for evaluators and teachers. The suburban district in Massachusetts charted its own initiatives to improve teacher evaluations by placing a high priority on the teacher evaluation process.

In spite of a very busy schedule, Ellen, a high school principal from that suburban Massachusetts district, never complained of a lack of training to evaluate her teachers.

She also reported that she received a lot of support from her superintendent to accomplish her evaluations effectively. This was in the form of establishing teacher evaluations as a high priority item in the district. Carl, the secondary principal from the Connecticut district, also reported that evaluation training was provided to teachers and evaluators. John, the urban principal, and Allen, from the rural district, both reported an historical lack of district support, which accounts for why their school districts are just starting to move away from the old check list style of evaluating teachers.

2. Superintendents must provide the training for principals and teachers in the use of current evaluation formats and must provide adequate time to accomplish the necessary tasks of the teacher evaluation format.

Providing time and training for both teachers and principals is a necessary and well documented component (McGreal, 1983; Saphier and Gower, 1987) of effective teacher evaluation formats. Issues of time and training translate into the expenditure of more money, which is a precious commodity in most school systems, and is probably the reason why more time and training are not available for teachers and principals. Another perspective offered by the interview data, however, suggests that more funds need to be expended to nurture and protect the proficiencies of the teaching personnel. Most school districts appropriate more

than seventy-five percent of their total budget towards teachers' salaries. Five weak teachers can translate into $150,000 ($30,000 average salary) being inefficiently spent. Unless these teachers are deemed incompetent and not capable of improvement, effective evaluation coupled with appropriate stave development and not termination is the realistic solution for improving teaching skills.

3. School boards and superintendents must view teacher evaluations as a dynamic and changing process, and empower teachers and principals to direct the course of the evolution of those evaluation formats.

The interviews with teachers and principals demonstrated that even the most current evaluation formats in the suburban districts are dated and in fact are evolving from their present state. School boards and superintendents need to facilitate this evaluation evolution rather than impede its progress. Their allegiance to an evaluation format should be based on continuing assessment of its appropriateness and effectiveness and not on traditional top down decision making. School boards and superintendents should be listening and supporting the teachers and principals, who are closest to the teacher evaluation arena.

This change is occurring because even the present formats are not filling the variety of needs exhibited by all teachers and principals. Just as teachers and principals realize that students show a range of learning

styles, superintendents and school boards need to recognize that teachers and principals are workers who also have differing learning styles, and as their perspectives from the interviews demonstrate, a variety of wants and needs. For example, while teachers desired feedback from their principals, the nature and intensity of the information or interactions varied. Evaluation formats, even those that purport to be on the cutting edge, that do not recognize differences in teachers and principals, fall short of meeting their needs.

The notion that one size fits all is not appropriate for the teacher evaluation process. Berliner (1988) reported that teachers are at various levels of pedagogical expertise during their careers, and evaluations should recognize these differences. Thus, school boards and superintendents should support and encourage constant examination and exploration of strategies and techniques to evaluate teachers. Their policies on teacher evaluation should offer enough flexibility to support the evolution of the teacher evaluation formats in their district, while not being so restrictive as to stifle the creativity and energy of teachers and principals who are willing to try something new and different. Clearly, all four of the principals expressed a variety of preferences in performing teacher evaluations when they spoke about their ideal evaluation format. Certainly the teachers voiced their opinions about

teacher evaluation as they told of their perspectives. This demonstrates that both groups think about the evaluation process, and thus can and should be contributors to the formation and implementation of teacher evaluation formats.

Building Level Recommendations

It's educationally sound that all school boards and superintendents make teacher evaluation a top priority, committing finances and efforts to improve that process. It's equally clear from the interview data that not all school districts are willing to make teacher evaluation a top priority. There are, however, recommendations that can be implemented at the building level regardless of the district's priority towards teacher evaluations, and these suggestions can address some of the issues that teachers raised as themes during the interviews.

1. Principals should communicate to teachers the organizational details and contractual obligations involved with the teacher evaluation process in their buildings.

The data from the interviews suggest that increased and clearer communication about the evaluation process on the part of teachers and principals, and cultivating mutual respect between the two groups can provide more success and satisfaction in teacher evaluations for teachers and principals. In these areas, I believe that principals should assume most of the responsibility of making the

necessary overtures to increase mutual communication and respect with their teachers.

As a principal, I believe it is important to inform teachers of the evaluation time frame, including the number and length of the classroom observations. I also describe for the teachers how the observation data will be used in their evaluations and how this information will be shared. In meetings with new teachers, I explain the parameters of the evaluation format in great detail. These efforts are designed to minimize for the teachers, the potential for confusion and anxiety with the evaluation process.

The nature of teacher evaluations is hierarchical, and thus, it is more beneficial to the success of the evaluation process for the individual in the position of power to be perceived as willing to share, or even relinquish some of that power. Sharing information collectively at staff meetings or individually at teacher conferences, and sharing some control of the evaluation parameters are vehicles to distribute power. Teachers can also participate in facilitating communication with principals by honestly reacting to their evaluations. The importance of teachers sharing those reactions with their principals is that the information may serve as an indicator of the potential success or failure of the actual evaluation.

Teachers are more comfortable and understanding if the know what is going to happen and why it is going to happen

that way. This provides principals an opportunity to explain to teachers the circumstances that influence the evaluation process. If, for example, the principal can only visit a class for fifteen minutes for an observation of a teacher because the superintendent is conducting a mandatory administrators' meeting later that morning, then the principal should communicate that fact to the teacher. Without that explanation, the teacher may view the relatively short observation incorrectly, and further, may harbor negative feelings towards the principal which might affect further evaluations and even color other types of interactions.

Sharing information by the principal also demonstrates respect for the teacher as a valued worker in the organization and earns respect for the principal as a worker who also is subjected to issues of power by superintendents and school boards. I am not suggesting that principals devote large chunks of time to speak to teachers about all school management issues. Routine occurrences can be shared by memos; however, based on the interview data it seems beneficial to spend a few moments to speak with teachers to make them aware of circumstances that affect important issues like teacher evaluations. Infusing a sense of inclusion with teachers reinforces their importance as members of the school organization. Additionally, informing teachers of pertinent data demonstrates that while

principals may occupy the perceived seat of power in their buildings, they do not enjoy that advantage with respect to the entire system, and like teachers are subject to pressure from their supervisors.

2. Regardless of the format, principals can offer additional services for upcoming observations or evaluations.

These additional services should not infer there are problems with the teacher, unless those problems truly exist, but should be a genuine attempt by the principal to fill a void. Because of contractual restraints, both teachers and principals may be forced to use an ineffective evaluation format, like a checklist, which really does not help teachers. By raising this issue, principals not only show awareness of the problem, but also demonstrate that their mission is to provide help to teachers in spite of a weak evaluation format. Realistically, not all teachers will accept an offer to expose their teaching to closer scrutiny; some teachers however, may welcome the opportunity to receive additional feedback.

3. Principals need to provide both compliments on good teaching (if possible) and suggestions for improvement.

Within their stories, many teachers reported the need to hear something positive from the principal about the evaluation, yet they also remarked that too much praise was not believable. Principals should strive for a balance

between providing reinforcement for effective teaching behaviors and offering realistic suggestions for improvement. Most teachers recognize when they are being patronized, and accordingly, principals will be more effective evaluators if they take a moment to say something honestly constructive and helpful.

4. Principals should avoid manipulative situations in the teacher evaluation process.

Teachers must perceive that the evaluation process is designed to take an objective look at their teaching performance in the classroom. Principals must report what they observed accurately and honestly and must not use the evaluation process either to grant favors or to punish teachers. Principals must not use the teacher evaluation process in a punitive manner in order to solve problems in other areas. If teacher evaluations are going to be of any use to the teachers, the process must be free of inequities and unfair practices.

These recommendations are ways for principals to improve their effectiveness as evaluators regardless of the district's evaluation format. They are not time-consuming or labor-intensive strategies, but rather are simple and quick ways to maximize the impact of evaluating teachers. While these suggestions may be helpful, they are certainly not inclusive. They can, however, point us to areas that need further examination.

Future Research

While expanding this study to include more teachers and principals is one direction for further research, I believe a more productive direction might include an examination of two other players in the evaluation arena, superintendents and school board members. Their positions of power in a school district grant them control of the finances and correspondingly of the nature and priority of various components of the school district, such as teacher evaluations. I believe that knowing more about the perspectives of the two groups who influence the priority of evaluations in a school district and who control the format of teacher evaluations would be beneficial to the teachers and principals.

Many of the themes raised by the teachers and principals in this study are the result of their experiences with their district's priority towards teacher evaluations. While this study was not designed to look at the priority levels of teacher evaluations, the data from teachers and principals suggest that future studies should. An understanding and sharing of the perspectives of superintendents and school board members may provide insights as to how all of the groups involved in teacher evaluations can accomplish this task comfortably and productively.

Conclusions

I began my journey through the issues surrounding teacher evaluations with a sense of optimism and a genuine desire to improve the results of this process for teachers and principals. My motivation to pursue this topic was generated from my own experiences with teacher evaluation, both as a teacher and administrator. These experiences with this process left me feeling abandoned as a teacher and ineffectual as a principal.

During my seven years of teaching, I was observed three times by my principal and two times by the head of the science department. The major concern of the principal was that my calendar showed the correct month, and I'm not sure what concerned the department chair. I do know that the formal evaluation process did not help me improve my teaching. I did that on my own and with the help of a few colleagues. During the past seventeen years as a principal and assistant principal, I have observed and evaluated many teachers. In spite of good intentions, I'm not convinced that I've helped many teachers improve their teaching skills. As a result of these experiences, I wanted to explore the issues surrounding teacher evaluations from the perspectives of these two groups. While I certainly formed my own opinions about this process as a result of my experiences as a teacher and principal, I needed to hear

other teachers and principals talk about their experiences with the teacher evaluation process.

During the interviews I spent hundreds of hours listening to these educators tell stories about their personal and professional lives. Because of their candor and honesty, I had an opportunity to learn more about how other people feel about teacher evaluations. As a result, I do not feel as optimistic about improving the teacher evaluation process as I did nearly two years ago. The circumstances that surround the evaluation of teachers today in public secondary schools lead me to conclude that to perform teacher evaluations to improve instruction or to make employment decisions is nearly an impossible administrative task.

I believe this situation exists because teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, and state departments of education do not share realistic and consistent beliefs and practices about the teacher evaluation process, and I'm not convinced that these various constituents ever will have enough in common to make evaluation work. The process of educating students has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. In my view, the most profound changes have occurred with the students and the resulting tasks for teachers and principals. Fewer students come to school ready to learn;

and correspondingly, schools have been forced to adjust to the changing needs of their students.

A principal, is confronted with accomplishing more tasks, which are delegated or legislated by superintendents, school boards, and the Department of Education, with fewer resources and less time. Principals need to be concerned with the changing needs and wants of students, teachers, and parents. Under conditions in which they are overwhelmed with important tasks, and without a clear vision of the status of the task of evaluating in their school districts, it is difficult to perform teacher evaluations successfully and beneficially. Those who genuinely believe that principals should provide help to teachers, are totally frustrated by these circumstances. Many would prefer not to evaluate teachers, rather than pretend to do a quality job.

Instead of going through the motions of evaluating, using formats that don't help teachers and creating more unproductive work for principals, I recommend a realistic and honest restructuring of existing practices. Perhaps the teachers' needs, which include feedback, positive reinforcement, and professional growth, could be satisfied using alternative methods to the traditional format of principals observing classes. Peer, student, and self-evaluations are well-documented assessment styles which could be employed in place of administrative observations of teachers. Negotiating more flexibility in the parameters of

the evaluation formats with teachers' associations might relieve the time constraints felt by principals.

Whatever is done to productively address the problems surrounding teacher evaluations needs to include the perspectives of teachers and principals, as well as the traditionally held views of school committees and superintendents. If a school district or the community cannot or will not provide the time and money for teachers and administrators to perform teacher evaluations properly (to improve instruction or make employment decisions), then school boards and superintendents should recognize these current limitations and modify their expectations for the evaluation process. On the other hand, if school boards and superintendents are willing to incorporate the perspectives of principals and teachers into a more realistic and doable evaluation format, then the teacher evaluation process might better satisfy its formative and summative purposes.

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION

INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATION

DEAR EDUCATOR,

My name is James Cokkinias and I am the Principal of Turners Falls High School in Massachusetts. I am also a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. I am doing research which will be based on interviews with public school teachers and principals in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The purpose of the research is to make the teacher evaluation process more meaningful for teachers and principals.

I would like to speak with you about the prospect of your participating in my research. This participation would involve my interviewing you about your life as an educator with an emphasis on the issues surrounding your experiences with the teacher evaluation process. The interviews will occur at a time that is convenient for you (I am prepared to spend three days at your school to interview during your preparation period). If you are at all interested, please call me at (413) 863-9341 during the day, or at (413) 525-5818 during the evening.

Sincerely,

James Cokkinias

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

"Within the context of their work experience what is it like for teachers and principals to participate in the process of teacher evaluation?"

I. My name is james Cokkinias and I am the Principal of Turners Falls High School. I am also a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. I am doing research which will be based on interviews with public school teachers and principals in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The purpose of the research is to make the teacher evaluation process more meaningful for teachers and principals.

II. You are being asked to participate in this study. I will conduct three 90-minute interviews. The first interview ill ask you to talk about how you came to be a teacher or principal and what that is like for you. The second interview will as you to describe what it is like to participate in the teacher evaluation process. The third interview will ask you to reflect on the meaning of the teacher evaluation process within the context constructed during the previous two interviews.

III. The interviews will be audio-taped and later transcribed by myself or a professional secretary. My goal is to analyze the materials from the interviews and to develop an understanding of the needs of teachers and principals as they relate to the evaluation process. This understanding would be used in my dissertation, journal articles, presentations to professional groups, and other purposes related to my work as a principal. In all written material and oral presentations in which I may use materials from your interviews, I will use neither your name, names of people mentioned by you, nor the name of your school or school system. The process of interviewing contains risks,

and although I cannot make a 100% guarantee, every effort will be made to protect your anonymity.

IV. While consenting at this time to participate in these interviews,you may at any time withdraw from the interview process without prejudice. Additionally, you have the right to review and reject any material gathered from the interviews. At your request, I will provide copies of the audio tapes which you may review. If you need to contact me, call my office at (413) 863-9341. In the evening, I can be reached at (413) 525-5818.

V. Once the study is complete, a summary of the dissertation will be mailed to you.

VI. In signing this form you are agreeing to the use of the materials from your interviews as indicated in section III. If I wish to use any materials from your interviews in any ways not consistent with what is stated in section III, I will contact you to explain and request your further consent.

VII. In signing this form, you are assuring me that you will make no financial claims for the use of the materials from you interview. Finally, in signing this you are thus stating that no medical liability will be incurred by me or the University of Massachusetts.

I,_____, have read the above statements and agree to be interviews under the conditions stated above.

_____
Signature of participant

_____
date

_____
Interviewer

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, K. and Alexander, M.D. (1980). American Public School Law. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company.

Ashbaugh, C.R., and Kaster, K. (1987). Should teachers be involved in teacher appraisal? NASSP Bulletin, 71, 50-53.

Backus, J.M. (1989). Teacher evaluation methods and attitudes towards evaluation in metropolitan Milwaukee public schools. Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Dissertation abstracts international, v. 51(03).

Berliner, D.C. (1988). The development of expertise in pedagogy. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. New Orleans, LA.

Bird, T. & Little, J. (1985). Instructional leadership in eight secondary schools: Final report. Boulder CO: Center for Action Research, Inc.

Bolton, D.L. (1973). Selection and evaluation of teachers. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Company.

Boyd, R. (1989). Improving teacher evaluations. ERIC Digest No. 111, Washington, DC: American Institute for Research.

Brainard, F. (1989). Professional development schools: Status as of 1989. (Occasional Paper No. 9.) Seattle: Center for Educational Renewal, College of Education, University of Washington.

Castetter, W.B. (1986). The personnel function in educational administration. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company.

Cogan, M. (1973). Clinical supervision. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Cokkinias, J. (1990). (Case study of teachers' perspectives on student feedback). Unpublished raw data.

Conway, B., & Coleman, A. (1984). Burnout and school administrators. . .A review of the literature. Small School Forum. v. 6, n. 1, Fall 1984.

Dabbs, J.M. (1982). Making things visible. In J. Van Maanen, J.M. Dabbs, & R.F. Faulkner (Eds.), Varieties of qualitative research (pp. 31-66). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishers.

Dressel, P.L. (1978). Handbook of academic evaluation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Drucker, P.F. (1954). The practice of management. New York: Harper & Row publishers.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research in teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research in teaching. (3rd ed., pp. 119-161). NY: MacMillan.

Fowler, F. & Gettys, C. (1989). Becoming a principal: The first years. A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association. Little Rock, AR.

Gage, N.L. (1959). The appraisal of teaching in large universities. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

Giannangelo, D., & Malone, M. (1987). Teachers' perceptions of the principal's role. ERIC document, ED299672.

Goetz, J.P. & LeCompte, M.D. (1984). Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Goldhammer, R. (1969). Clinical supervision. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.

Guba, E.G.,& Lincoln, Y.S. (1981). Effective evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Harris, B.M. (1986). Administration of public education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Iwanicki, E.F. (1981). Contract plans: A professional growth-orientated approach to evaluating teacher performance. In J. Millman (Ed.), Handbook of Teacher Evaluation, (pp. 203-208). Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publishers.

Johnson, W., & Snyder, K. (1986). Instructional leadership training needs for school principals. Journal of Educational Administration, v. 24, n. 2, pp. 237-253.

Kiley, M.A. (1988). Teachers and administrators views of evaluation: Differing perspectives. ERIC document, ED300434.

Kirk, J., & Miller, M.L. (1986). Reliability and validity in qualitative research. Qualitative Research Methods Services. vol.1. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publishers.

Knezevick, S.J. (1984). Administration of public education. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Lewis, J. (1973). Appraising teacher performance. West Nyack, NY: Parker Publishing Company.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Logan, C. & others. (1990). Teaching and learning components for induction and renewable teacher certification: A state-wide verification study. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA. ED335398.

McGreal, T.L. (1983). Successful teacher evaluation. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McGregor, D. (1960). The human side of enterprise. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Co.

Merriam, S. (1988). Case study research in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miller, R.I. (1987). Evaluating faculty for promotion and tenure. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Millman, J. (1981). Student achievement as measure of teacher competence. In J. Millman (Ed.), Handbook of Teacher Evaluation, (pp. 146-166). Beverely Hills, CA: Sage

Mock, S., & Melnick, S. (1991). The marginal teacher: A survey of principals' attitudes. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Educational Research Association. Ellenville, NY, October 24, 1991.

Patton, M.Q. (1980). Qualitative evaluation methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publishers.

Peterson, C.H. (1982). A century's growth in teacher evaluation in the United States. NY, NY: Vantage Press, Inc.

Peterson, D. (1985). Developing teacher evaluation systems with potential for increasing student performance. Educational research Quarterly. v. 10, n. 2, pp. 39-46.

Peterson, P.L., & Comeaux, M. (1989). Evaluating the systems: Teachers' perspectives on teacher evaluation. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, v. 12, n. 1, pp. 3-24.

Poggio, J.P.,& others. (1989). Teaching characteristics: A search for classifications. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education. San Francisco, CA. ED325478.

Popham, W.J. (1973). Evaluating instruction. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

Popham, W.J. (1981). Teacher evaluation: The wrong tests for the right job. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angles, CA.

Rallis, S., & Highsmith, M. (1986). The myth of the "great principal": Questions of school management and instructional leadership. Phi-Delta-Kappan, v. 68, n. 4, pp. 300-304.

Reddin, W.J. (1971). Effective management by objectives. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.

Saphier, J., & Gower, R. (1987). The skillful teacher. Carlisle, MA: Research for Better Teaching Inc.

Seidman, I.E. (1991). Interviewing as qualitative research. New York: Teachers College Press.

Seidman, I.E., Sullivan, P.J., & Schatzkamer, M.B. (1983). The work of the community college faculty: a study through in-depth interviews, (Grant No. NIE-G-81-0056). Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Sergiovanni, T.J., & Starrat, R.J. (1979). Supervision: Human perspectives. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Seyfarth, J.T., & Nowinski, E.M. (1987). Administrator feedback can improve classroom instruction. The NASSP Bulletin, v. 71, n. 503, pp. 47-50.

Smith, M.L. (1987). Publishing qualitative research. American Educational Research Journal, vol 24, n 2, pp. 173-184.

Stiggins, R. & Bridgeford, N. (1985). Performance assessment for teacher development. Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis, v. 7, n. 1, pp. 85-97.

Striefer, P.A. (1987). Teacher evaluation systems: A review of the critical issues and the current state of the art. Andover, MA: The Regional Laboratory.

Swender, L.D. (1985). Selected teachers' perceptions of administrative evaluation of instruction at the junior high school level in a southeast Kansas community. Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University. Dissertation Abstracts International, v. 46(10).

Taylor, S.J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). Introduction to qualitative research methods. (2nd. ed.) New York: Wiley Pub.

Travers, R.M. (1981). Criteria of good teaching. In J. Millman (Ed.), Handbook of Teacher Evaluation, (pp. 14-22). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishers.

Turchetti, T. (1989). The impact on job performance of teachers' perceptions of administrators' actions. Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Albany. Dissertation Abstracts International, v. 51(02).

Weber, J.R. (1987). Teacher evaluation as a strategy for improving instruction. Elmhurst, IL: North Central Regional Educational Lab.

Wise, A., Darling-Hammond, L., McLaughlin, M., and Bernstein, Harriet. (1984). Teacher evaluation: A study of effective practices. Prepared for the National Institute of Education. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation.

Witherspoon, E. (1989). Redefining teacher evaluation and staff development: An ownership model for professional improvement. ERIC Document. (pp. 1-16), Hobart, IN.